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A

CHANCE MARRIAGE.

FROM THE FRENCH OF EMILE GABORIAU,

BY

VINCENZO CALFA,

TRANSLATOR OF MICHELET'S "BIBLE OF HUMANITY."

NEW YORK:

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TO

HENRIETTA BACH,

THE ACCOMPLISHED WIFE

OF THE

CHEVALIER PIETRO CENTEMERI,

THIS TRANSLATION

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VINCENZO CALFA.

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DECEMBER
1878.

A CHANCE MARRIAGE.

CHAPTER I.

Why Pascal Divorne handed in his resignation within fifteen days after his departure from the School of Civil Engineers, of which he was one of the most promising pupils, no one ever knew.

He did not take the trouble to explain, nor did he give any reasons for his action, probably because he had none to give. By this I mean satisfactory reasons, based on a certain personal interest or a prudent self-love, such in fact as would be admissible and conclusive to judges of a paying business.

The opportunities for him to declare the truth, or to equivocate, were not wanting. All his distant relatives in Paris as well as his acquaintances, skillfully sounded him. They hoped to discover some secret or perhaps some little scandal, and this was very

tempting. But he was cruel enough to deceive these worthy inquisitors, who excuse their intermeddling in the affairs of others, by assigning the eternal and hackneyed pretext of a tender interest which is never felt. He laughed at these persons so obliging, always ready to open their hearts in confidence and their mouths in good counsel, but who never open their purses when their assistance is needed.

Some of them were very persistent. These Pascal took aside, and, after glancing about with the look of a restless conspirator, mysteriously, and in a very low whisper, pronounced the significant word—"politics"—although he had never in his life given any attention to the subject. This expedient succeeded; for these troublesome persons fled affrighted, imagining that they already saw the prison of *Mont Saint Michel* opened to receive them.

Their fruitless attacks were abandoned and Pascal was left to his tranquillity, but not without their declaration that he was not a very social young man, that he was destitute of candor, and that it would be prudent to be guarded against him so long as he held his extreme opinions.

His particular friends were still left to him, and to them he made the simple statement

that, although a Frenchman and a very good Frenchman, he detested all kinds of uniforms, even if they were more adorned than a shrine; that governmental employment was not adapted to his taste, that the uncertain chances of fortune appeared more desirable to him than any fixed appointment, small or great, deserved or not; in a word, that his own independence was a thousand times more precious to him than all the honors of the administration, even than the portfolio of the prime minister.

His friends were naturally indifferent to the motive of his actions. It was of no importance to them whether he did one thing or another. They unanimously declared that his utterances were wise, and that his course was the right one. Only one boldly censured the young engineer, and in a patronizing tone reproached him for his precipitate imprudence. This was the bosom friend of Pascal, his confidant, his chum at the college of Henry IV. They had pursued their studies together and were afterwards inseparable.

This *fidus Achates,* transformed into a Mentor, was named Eugene Lorilleux. He was two or three years older than Pascal. About eighteen months previous to this, he had received a diploma as "Doctor of Medicine," and was now looking with some anx-

iety for patients.

He was still at the beginning of a profession which, above all others, is difficult and precarious. He had a few patients, but they were of a class that paid little or nothing. These sick people inhabited garrets, wretched holes. In order to prescribe for them he had to go up four or five flights. He had gratuitous and paying consultations, but since only the poor called on him, he concluded that it was useless to keep up the distinction. He, however, had patience, and waited for the "moment that leads to fortune, which" as it is said "comes three times in the life of every man," and which each should be ready to seize upon when it comes.

A painstaking student, he relied on his scientific attainments and his talents to acquire reputation and fortune. In this he was, and continued to be, deceived. That he was learned was incontestable; but he was deficient in perception, in insinuating manners, in audacity. In his study he was self-reliant and most tenacious of his theories, but at the bedside of his patients he had not that quick insight into disease, that divining sense, that instant inspiration, which characterize all great and true physicians.

Lorilleux was, however, by no means an ordinary man. His great misfortune was

that he had never known enthusiasm. He never had youth or adolescence. He was born old, and he is to-day just what he was in his fourteenth year, when he was studying for the third bench of the Lyceum. There is no change in him, neither in size nor character. He is small, precise and formal. He is so exceedingly solemn, dignified and self-important, as to appear, at times, ridiculous. His insignificant figure is not the reflection of his mind for that is a blank page on which nothing can be deciphered. More subtle than the ordinary Norman peasant, he has the weakness of supposing that all the world has the same mania as himself for finessing.

He did not believe in disinterested actions and he always saw some hidden motives in those of others. You could not make him understand that people sometimes acted on the spur of the moment, without consideration. His invariable answer was: "there is something underneath." His days were spent in baffling, by skillful manœuvres, fantastical conspiracies, or in laboriously unravelling the chimerical thread of some very complicated plot. Such exaggerated fears and fancies made his life miserable. His friends often laughed at his singular apprehensions, and when they found him more

preoccupied with them than ordinarily, they would say: "Well, Lorilleux, we want to know if you have solved the enigma!"

In a word, this close calculator looked upon life as a series of problems in algebra, the solution of which clever people must carry in their pockets. For ten years he had followed one rule of conduct, which he believed in—never to trust chance; and he never varied from it in the least.

Is it astonishing that such a man was narrow-minded? He was the very opposite of Pascal, who had large ideas, a positive audacity in conception, and great courage in the initiative. Hence it was that he was reproached for having romantic ideas.

These opposite characteristics are sufficient to account for the great friendship between these young men; but there was still another cause for it. For a long time the physician had a design upon his friend, who was unconscious of it. It dated from their college days.

Lorilleux had a sister ten years younger than himself, whom he tenderly loved. During the age that other young men indulge in ideas of pleasure alone, he was planning for his sister's future. Their mother, Madame Lorilleux, was a widow. All her fortune consisted of an annuity which

would terminate with her life. What would become of the young girl in the event of her mother's death? And, even aside from such a calamity, what would be her destiny in later life? A young lady without dowry stood no chance of marriage; her family connections could scarcely make the "two ends of the year meet," and there was no prospect that her brother, from the income of his profession, would be able to furnish her with a marriage portion by the time that she had reached her twentieth year. How then could she find a husband?

These were the ideas that tormented this precocious calculator at the age of seventeen; when he suddenly thought that his friend Pascal, would, in about ten years, make an excellent match for his dear sister. This idea appeared sublime to the penetrating collegian. He instantly seized upon it and was haunted continually by it. He turned it over in every way, considered it in all its phases, calculated all its probabilities; and arrived at the conclusion that it was not only most admirable as well as most necessary, but also that, with a little patience and address, it might be realized.

"The fortune," he said to himself, "will be no obstacle; the family of Pascal is wealthy, and he is the most disinterested of men."

My sister is pretty, modest and refined; she will make him happy, and will be the best of mothers. She will certainly please Pascal; but, even if he did not love her, he would marry her out of his affection for me, his dearest friend, and so strengthen our friendship and become my brother. Thus shall I procure the happiness of the two whom I most cherish, and to this end shall my efforts be directed."

It was for this that Lorilleux became and continued the intimate friend of Pascal, and took so tender an interest in all that concerned him. He knew to a cent the precise amount that he would inherit some day, and he had even spent fifteen days in Brittany, in the house of his future "brother-in-law," for the express purpose of studying the characteristics of the future relatives of his sister. He returned convinced that there were no obstacles on that side.

In the meantime he never uttered a word, nor made the slightest allusion to the subject. He never said anything that could awaken any suspicion as to his design, or cause any alarm. He was altogether too sagacious for that. His sister was yet too young, and Pascal had not left college. It was necessary to wait, and he waited.

But in the meantime, how attentive he

was to his friend! How he coddled him! How solicitous he was to know everything that concerned him and his family! Was there not involved, (as is often the case in provincial places) some little cousin delicately brought up, some project of union? No, nothing of the kind.

When Pascal was admitted to the Polytechnic School, he was congratulated by Lorilleux, who was undoubtedly the happier of the two. How he praised and glorified him, saying to himself: "Good, my sister will marry an officer of Artillery."

But Pascal and three others left and joined the School of Civil Engineers.

"Bravo!" said Lorilleux to himself, on learning of this decision, "garrison life would not be agreeable to my sister; she will be the wife of an Engineer; this suits me better," and he rubbed his hands.

We may judge of his disappointment when the young engineer resigned without consulting him and without saying anything to him as to his intentions. This independent way of acting annoyed the physician; and besides that he considered it very foolish to abandon a permanent position, a magnificent career! "The deuce take the thoughtless fellow," he repeated to himself, in the same tone, as if he said; "My

poor sister has a husband who acts very foolishly."

He, however, partly concealed his annoyance. Pascal was a Breton, and that is to say, very tenacious of his own views. To change his determinations was impossible; and Lorilleux did not attempt to do so. It would have thrown a coldness over their warm friendship. But he earnestly denounced his inconsiderateness. The folly was done, it was now necessary to take advantage of it, and the physician had, at this time, in view a certain position for an engineer.

"What will you do now," he asked Pascal, "since you have thrown away five years?"

"Do you think so, my dear friend? I thought that I had spent my time profitably."

"But, what have you decided upon this time?"

"You will see. I have a project."

"Ah!" said Lorilleux, with feeling, "you have never spoken to me about it."

"I wished to give you a surprise."

"Let me say in conclusion, that there is no one living who wishes you success more than I do. But life is not a romance. Depend upon it, you are deceived. At any rate, my friendship compels me to give you my opinion; you have acted unwisely."

CHAPTER II.

Unfortunately the opinion of Lorilleux was also the opinion of Pascal's father, who was a licensed attorney in the Court of Common Pleas, of Lannion, on the northern coast of France.

The news of his son's sudden resignation, pained him exceedingly. His most cherished desires and projects, which, as a considerate father, he had entertained for his only son, had come to an end. The fond dream of his life had been to see Pascal the inheritor of his name and fortune, as an engineer, and to promenade the streets of Lannion with him, dressed in his superbly-embroidered uniform, with a sword at his side and a helmet on his head; but now, in the moment of its realization, it vanished. Mr. Divorne decided that it was only "caprice," because Pascal merely notified him that he had retired from the service, without a word of explanation or apology.

Less than this would make a man furious, and the attorney did not fail to show his anger and send Pascal his severe remonstrances; and certainly he would have been

justified in denouncing him twenty times over.

After the first excitement had passed, the unhappy father tried to reflect. It might have been better, had he done so at the beginning. He asked himself what right had a man, twenty-four years of age—for whom he had succeeded in securing a position, first in the Polytechnic School, and afterwards in the School of Civil Engineers, and whose education cost him more than thirty thousand francs—to resign his position without the consent of his parents or guardians? Had he any right whatever? He questioned it, he consulted the authorities, but alas! the evidence was against him. With profound sadness he detected a flaw in the law, and although he was an interpreter and a passionate admirer of decrees and statutes, he cursed the legislators and accused their want of foresight.

In connection with this, and as if to increase his sadness and to inflame his anger, all whom he met in the streets wore sorrowful countenances, as if they knew all about what had occurred.

The fact was that the news had spread rapidly through all Lannion, and on the very same evening had been discussed in ten different localities. All sympathized

with the father and censured the son without measure.

From that day Pascal was undone. His fellow villagers declared that he was a lost youth, that he would never amount to anything, and that he would come to a bad end.

It was certainly very sad to realize that he would, sooner or later, bring dishonor upon his unhappy father. Some one had even said that Mr. Divorne had grown ten years older in two days. In a little while they would have affirmed that he had become gray in a night, as there have been instances of this kind known to have happened.

In a word, Pascal could not have been more seriously reviled, had he ruined his family, committed perjury, or deserved the convict's cell. Such was the great tenderness of heart of these charitable country people.

Madame Divorne received twenty calls during the week. She never knew that she had so many friends, All the women, however slightly acquainted, found some good pretext for calling, in order to ascertain exactly how matters stood, and they increased her heart wound, if indeed her heart had been wounded.

It is important to say here that all, who blamed the son and sympathized with the un-

fortunate father, were generally convinced that his punishment was just. The attorney had always been prosperous, and prosperity in a little provincial town is a crime not easily pardoned. The success of one is an injury to another. Jealousy lies dormant in all hearts. How many secret and envenomed hatreds have their origin in this way!

Mr. Divorne was envied more than any other person in Lannion. He had been poor, and was now rich. He also owned the finest house in the village, but the people remembered the coarse clothing he wore when he was a clerk in the office of his predecessor, and they said he had been very lucky in business.

"He has indeed been very fortunate," said they, whose want of sagacity or manifest incapability had doomed to uniform mediocrity: "He is really a lucky fellow."

A small inheritance had enabled him to pursue his studies, and his wife's dowry had purchased his business. Afterwards he had uniformily prospered through thrift and economy,

How many fathers had he humiliated, in other days, by contrasting his son with their sons! And with what unction did he express the satisfaction which his son

gave him by annually returning with the first prize, having passed his examination with a clear vote! And afterwards how loudly did he speak of his high expectations!

This occurrence was therefore a merited punishment, another proof that no reliance can be placed on these model college boys, these young men of high spirit; they trust to their own superiority; they desire to strike out into new paths, disdaining to follow in the footsteps of their ancestors, and usually turn out bad. It is an old saying that "genius is impracticable."

So it was for fifteen days; all who approached Mr. Divorne assumed a doleful countenance, because of his grief, although their hearts were filled with delight. At court he was condoled, and at the club he received a profusion of consolation; and his irritation was increased by his conviction that Pascal had actually committed a crime.

At home he vented his rage and threw the blame on his wife, whose motherly partiality, he maintained, was blind and imprudent, and had been the cause of all this evil. However, after further reflection and studying the situation more carefully, he became satisfied that the damage was not

irreparable, and he had already thought seriously of writing to the minister of the interior, or of making a journey to Paris for the purpose of soliciting an interview, when Pascal, unexpectedly, one fine evening made his appearance under the paternal roof. He had arrived by the stage that ran between Rennes and Brest.

His coming was certainly a surprise, and Josette, the old governess, who went to the door grumbling at the impertinence of the person, who was so bold as to ring the bell so furiously at that unreasonable hour, came near falling back in astonishment when she beheld her young master.

She recognized him instantly, as she afterwards boasted, although his face was much altered, and he had grown taller and much stronger during the three years of his absence.

She cried aloud for joy and surprise, and, dropping the candle, ran up stairs, calling on every one as if the house was on fire.

In the meantime Pascal had closed the door and was groping his way in the dark.

"It is I," he cried out laughingly. "It is I, be not afraid." Surprised by the disturbance and the piercing cries of Josette, the attorney had opened the parlor door and demanded: "Well, what is the matter ? what

is the matter ? I say."

Josette's emotion was so great that she could not speak, but Madame Divorne had already recognized the voice of her son, and ran in haste to meet him, even while her husband was still repeating: "What is the matter ? what is the matter ?" Pascal was in the arms of his mother, who was crying for joy and pressing him warmly to her heart.

For the sake of this her dearly beloved son, she had suffered much during the past two weeks, but his presence was enough and more than sufficient to compensate for all that she had endured. Seeing him, all was pardoned, or rather, forgotten.

Mr. Divorne, on his part, in order to maintain his dignity, thought it proper to be impassible; and how could he do less since the principle of parental authority had been invaded ?

He succeeded to some extent in mastering his emotions, but not without a painful struggle could he put on a look of severity that concealed a tear. He succeeded, however, in preserving a coolness in his manner, and in exhibiting displeasure in his countenance, even while embracing his son who had been his joy and his pride. But further than this he had little control of

himself. When Pascal embraced him, he felt that his anger was melting like the snows by the breezes of April. Parental emotion was gaining the upper hand with him, but not wishing to expose his weakness he pretended to have some urgent business to attend to—urgent business in Lannion at nine o'clock at night !—and went out hurriedly, blowing his nose with unusual force.

The prodigal son had returned, and the father, unlike that one mentioned in the Bible, had not commanded the fatted calf to be killed for him; but the father of the Prodigal Son was not an advocate before the Court of Common Pleas. Pascal remained alone with his mother.

It was necessary to prepare supper for this traveler, who had the appetite of a man, that for the last two days had only hurriedly eaten whatever he could obtain at the railroad buffets. He, however, not wishing to choke himself, had gone half starved. Josette busied herself in spreading the table before the fireplace, and in running up and down from the kitchen to the dining room, and back again, almost beside herself, making ten turns for every necessary one and manifesting the depth of her emotion by now and then breaking a dish,

or wiping a tear from her eyes.

Madame Divorne was seated opposite to her son who was eating ravenously. She was in ecstasy, she gazed upon him admiringly, she desired to remain in this state for years. But an explanation between Pascal and his father was imminent, and that might be stormy. Was it necessary to caution Pascal, or to obtain any concession from him ? She would interpose even at the risk of drawing upon herself the anger of both.

"Thy father," she said, "is greatly irritated, thou naughty boy; thou hast given us, or at least given him much trouble."

"Not at all, my dear mother, I assure you: Let your mind be at ease, all will be well."

"At least thou shouldst have notified him, and asked his advice."

"Sure of a refusal, it would have been foolish: I could have gone no further; judge for yourself."

"Promise me at least that thou wilt be reasonable, even if he scolds, and that thou wilt not get angry."

"I will make you this pledge, but you will soon learn that I have been reasonable."

"Ah ! I hope so," murmured Madame Divorne sadly.

Pascal embraced her, and his cause was gained. She was now confident that he

could not be wrong, and she was ready to take sides with her son. And thus it is with all mothers : it is so difficult to convince them ! And then they cannot be imposed upon with bad reasons !

It appears the attorney recovered his equanimity by his out door exercise, for when he returned, after having dispatched the urgent business, his look was far from being harsh or severe. His anger had passed away, and he talked, laughed and jested good naturedly with his son, without even referring to his resignation.

The next day he did not speak about it any more than on the preceding night, nor did he mention it for several succeeding days. God knows, however, how he felt, when the people asked him wherever he went: "And so your son has returned ? Well, well, what does he say ?"

The report of Pascal's return had, in fact, spread rapidly; the people had seen the porter entering the house with a trunk and a hat box ; visitors began to assail the house, but Madame Divorne guarded the door, and made some enemies that day who never forgave her.

Once Pascal thought it would do him good to go out, but he had scarcely taken a few steps, before he was met by five per-

sons *two of whom he knew but little, and one he had never seen;* they all offered him their hands, and hypocritically inquired about the School of Engineers. He quickly returned home, denouncing his townsmen, and resolved that he would not again put his nose out of doors.

The days were passing, and Mr. Divorne seemed to have forgotten altogether his complaints against his son. Annoyed by this state of uncertainty, Pascal had desired twenty times to give the explanation which his father longed for, but was always prevented by his mother.

"Don't be in a hurry," she would say to him. "I know thy father: it takes him a long time to come to a decision. He has been considering since thy arrival. When he has made up his mind, be assured that he will let thee know his determination."

And so it was! One morning, after breakfast, when the table cloth was removed, the attorney asked his son to give him his attention.

"At last," thought Pascal, "the moment has come."

Mr. Divorne was exceedingly prolix in speech, so much so, that he had even been reprimanded in court for it; but, he never before had so abused this precious gift, as

on this serious occasion. The exordium to his discourse was a sort of apostrophe to paternal love. Who had discharged the duties of a parent better than himself? He would be judged by his own son. Had he not given him many proofs of his affection? And what had been his reward?

He then passed to the enumeration of the numberless cares which children give to parents. Nothing was forgotten of what he had done for him, from the time of cutting his first tooth, to the post-chaise journey to Paris, when he was very sick. This was the first point. The second related to pecuniary sacrifices, and was much longer. The attorney calculated and marked down all the moneys he had paid out, including the most trifling expenses, to secure for his son the advantages of an education of which he himself had been deprived.

Finally, as might be expected, in the third place he came to the subject of compensations, and acknowledged the satisfactions of every kind which he had received from Pascal. These were numerous, and he did not omit a single one.

In a word, this discourse was precisely like the perusal of a great paternal ledger, in which, on one side, were entered the sorrows and the losses, and, on the other,

the joys and the profits; and so far Mr. Divorne acknowledged that the balance was in favor of his son, and that he was his debtor.

"And now, my son," said he, in concluding his address, "I hope that thou wilt not change the present state of things. Thou must have reflected since thy return, and must now be sorry for having so foolishly ended thy career. Recall thy decision, write to the minister, who will not refuse to restore thee to thy position, and I will forgive thee the cruel chagrin which thou hast caused me."

The effect produced by this long dissertation was quite different from what Mr. Divorne expected; Pascal remained silent for some minutes, as he wished to collect all his forces. In appearance he seemed to hesitate, but, finally, with a firm voice, he said: "My father, what you desire is impossible. Such a demand would be rejected, and, besides that, I cannot consent to it."

"Very well," replied the attorney, with a sorrowful countenance, but ironically; "it is quite easy to get another position at once, and thou hast doubtless found something better."

"If no better," answered the son, "at least something more to my taste. You

must consider that I have reflected before acting, and as to my intentions, it was precisely to tell you what they are that I came home; and this was the more necessary because I will require your assistance."

"This is indeed fortunate! I now understand why thou hast thought of me. How then can I be of service to thee?"

"Before undertaking my enterprise, it is necessary to secure funds, and I must rely on you for them."

"Ah! now I perceive," said the attorney in a bantering tone, "thou dost require money; but it seems to me that before throwing up a good position, already secured, thou shouldst have made sure of my good will. If I were to deny thee—and I certainly will—"

"But my father," interposed Pascal, with some impatience, "it seems to me that, some ten years ago, an aunt of mine bequeathed to me about forty thousand francs."

Had any old woman of sixty years of age, almost confident of gaining one of her suits, come to him and said: "Mr. Divorne, I abandon it," the surprise would have been less than that produced by the words of his son.

"In short," said the attorney, bitterly,

"thou dost ask me to render an account of thy property. This is indeed a cruel surprise !"

Pascal vainly endeavored to clear himself from this imputation, for his words had cut to the quick. He tried to explain his contemplated project; to justify his course, and to tell him the use he wished to make of the money, but Mr. Divorne would not listen.

"What matters all this to me?" he said; "I will not know any thing about it."

By this time they had wandered far from the original subject, and Mr. Divorne had even forgotten about the discussion, and was only intent on devising some method by which the money that belonged to his son could be saved. His aim was to let Pascal have as little as possible, for he was fully persuaded that a young man could not put to a good use so large a sum.

"See here, Pascal," he said, at last, "I know that thou dost want money, but thou couldst have taken some other way of demanding it, without making thy father appear ridiculous. Did I ever refuse thee? I own that thou hast not made bad use of it, but thou hast been working hard for the last five years, and perhaps thou wouldst wish to amuse thyself, take a trip somewhere, or—"

"Why, not at all, my dear father; if you will allow me to speak, I will tell you."

"Hold thy peace and listen to me," said the father; "Thou hast doubtless contracted some debts. Well, well, all young people do that—"

"I do not owe a single sou."

"But hear me now: I will not ask any particulars. Dost thou want five thousand francs?"

"My dear father—"

"Thou needst more—very well, thou shalt have ten thousand francs."

And now the attorney arose and walked towards the door, to indicate that the discussion was closed; but Pascal saw that it was necessary to be plain, and he said decidedly:

"My father, I want all or nothing."

"Nothing then!" replied Mr. Divorne, in a threatening voice, "nothing! Dost thou believe, extravagant youth, that I will allow thee to dissipate thy little fortune?"

"This money, however, at present, is necessary and indispensable."

"Ah! it is indispensable, is it? very well. Thy aunt left thee a farm, a farm which I will deliver to thee in good condition, and with a profitable lease. Now then take it and be satisfied. What wilt thou do with

it?"

"I will sell it."

"Sell it? And dost thou think that thou canst realize the money on it in a day or two? Thou must wait for the opportunity, advertise it, and look about for a purchaser."

"I will advertise it, and try and find a purchaser."

"But thou dost not know, unfortunate boy, what thou art talking about! and what will all Lannion say if thou were to sell even the smallest part of it? Dost thou know what they would say?"

"Of what importance to me is anything that they can say?" exclaimed Pascal with animation. "I will immediately go and advertise it."

Mr. Divorne knew his son too well to persist, and perceiving that he had fully made up his mind, he said: "Stop, I will spare thee this disgrace; I will find the money, however great the sacrifice."

Pascal regretted his irritability, and desired to take his father by the hand, but was repulsed with these words: "I wish to spare thee these useless professions;" and then he added in an ironical tone; "I trust thou wilt allow me at least eight days." The old gentleman then shuffled out of the room,

shutting the door behind him with violence.

During all this conversation, Madame Divorne had not uttered a word. She simply wept. Pascal was confirmed in his determination by the anger of his father, but was weakened in the presence of his mother's tears, and kneeling beside her, and clasping her hands, he exclaimed: "Mother, dear mother, say one word—say but one word, and I renounce my project, and will do all in my power to withdraw my resignation."

A dazzling lustre of joy and triumph sparkled in the mother's eyes. Oh! how much he loved her, and what would he not sacrifice for her sake, although he had been so obstinate this very hour! Such were her thoughts as she said: "No, my own dear Pascal, no; follow thine own inspiration. I have full confidence in thee."

"But, my dear mother, it is necessary that you should know—"

"No," replied the mother, "no; I will know nothing. I tell thee again: I have full confidence in thee: and then, how could I ever understand—"

Pascal persisted, but she closed his mouth with her hands.

For several succeeding days the household was sad. The attorney was morose, and said nothing. He shut himself up in his

private room and was only visible at meal time: while Madame Divorne concealed herself that she might weep in secret.

Pascal did not like the idea of such torture. He would willingly have given two years of his life to get away. If he could only have spoken of his designs or shown his plans, it would have been a relief. But no; he had vainly attempted two or three times to see his father, and his mother uniformly put him off with the same words: "I have full confidence in thee."

At last, on the day indicated, Mr. Divorne conducted his son into his private room, and said: "Here is the account of my guardianship," pointing to a package of documents, "see if I have administered thy affairs like a good father: read and give me a receipt in full."

Pascal took a pen to write the receipt, but was interrupted by his father, who insisted that he should first read the papers.

But Pascal would not do it, and so the attorney deliberately took up the documents and commenced to read them aloud, emphasising certain details, and now and then pausing to ask: "Art thou satisfied with my administration?"

The papers were numerous, and by the time that the reading—which was most tor-

menting to Pascal—had ended, he was almost tired to death.

"Thou art entitled to forty-three thousand seven hundred and fifty francs and twelve sous," said the father. "Here is thy money; see if it is correct."

Pascal was about to put the money in his pocket, but was prevented by his father, who insisted that he should count the bills.

At length, Pascal complied, when his father said to him: "We are now quits, are we not? when wilt thou depart?"

"As soon as possible," replied Pascal: "to-morrow, if I can secure a place in the stage. They are waiting for me in Paris."

"Indeed," replied Mr. Divorne, "thou dost wrong to make people wait for thee."

"And yet, my dear father, I would not depart from you in your present frame of mind. You are unjust to me, and I would —"

"All this is idle talk," interposed the father impatiently, "leave me, for I have much to do."

By nine o'clock the next morning the carrier's boy came to inform Pascal that the coach would be ready by the time that he could reach the office.

The farewells were painful. His mother sobbed aloud. To see the way in which she pressed her son to her heart, seemed as if

she was embracing him for the last time, and Pascal was scarcely less affected. It was with difficulty that he could restrain his tears, and he could not utter a single word.

But Mr. Divorne here showed the strength of his character, the energy of his will—an iron will—for he would neither embrace his son nor shake hands with him, and he even affected the tone of raillery and the manner of indifference. "Remember," said he to Pascal, "that thou carriest with thee all thy fortune. When thou hast squandered it, which, I presume will be before long, thou wilt honor me with another visit. I will always have thy room ready for thee."

Pascal went alone to the stage-coach, and the people of Lannion concluded that he had been driven from his father's house.

CHAPTER III.

About six years have elapsed since Pascal's return from his visit to Brittany. The train he took reached the station of Montparnasse at five o'clock in the morning. It was a

fine cold morning, the thermometer being seven or eight degrees below zero. None of the travelers, however, had been found frozen in the cars, although such incidents had been frequent before the railroad companies had conceived the happy idea of utilizing the steam of the locomotive for the comfort of the passengers.

Pascal had made a trying journey. He loved his parents dearly, and the idea that he had distressed them weighed like remorse on his heart. Never had the road seemed so long, as on his return. While he was anxious to arrive at Paris, the train seemed to move very slowly, and to be very long in reaching the city.

A few hours of sleep would have eased his impatience, but all his efforts to secure them were in vain; for he could scarcely close his eyes before some employee of the railroad would enter his compartment and demand his ticket, and so disturb him. And then, he was not accustomed to travel with 43,750 francs in his pocket, and the package of bills was a source of no little uneasiness: for, as a cautious man, he kept his hand on his money all the way from Lannion, and when he reached Paris his arm was almost cramped.

Terribly fatigued and bruised all over, he

had to wait half an hour or more for his baggage, and had just taken a seat in the waiting room, when he heard a cheerful voice calling out: "Ah! Mr. Engineer, Mr. Engineer."

On turning around and looking along the railing, so admirably adapted to separate those who arrive from those who are waiting to meet them, he saw a large man with a blooming countenance, who was greeting him with all manner of signs of friendship, and immediately went up to him.

"At last you have come, Mr. Engineer," said the man with the blooming face. "I received your letter and have been waiting for you. I trust you have had a pleasant journey!"

"Not very agreeable, I assure you. Ah, father Lantier, if I had not given you my word! But, I finally got the money."

"Hush, not so loud, in the name of heaven! if any one heard you! It is not safe to speak of money in so loud a voice. Mine is also ready, and deposited in the Bank. If I kept it in the house, it would not let me sleep. We will keep this money invested, if you please."

"Yes," said Pascal, with a sigh, "we ought not to lose the game."

"Lose the game, Mr. Engineer, when we hold all the trumps in our hands ! You are jesting, are you not? But come, you will live at my house; it is quite near."

"But, my dear friend, I would give you too much trouble."

"Give me trouble ! such a man as you ! You will not displease me by going to a hotel ! Take a good sleep until breakfast, after which we will talk over matters. I have discovered a brilliant affair; but I will go at once and call a coach."

If Lantier did not fire off a cannon in honor of Pascal, it was because he did not have one; but his house had been turned upside down; a good room had been arranged and warmed; a bottle of wine and a dish of excellent soup were prepared, and when Pascal was refreshed and ready to retire, the old gentleman told him, if he wanted anything, to ring the bell; and when assured by Pascal that all he needed was a little rest, and that he would be with him shortly, the honest old man retired on tip toe, and gently closed the door, saying to himself: "It is true, I am his partner, but who could have foretold that old Lantier would have become the partner of such a man? He is the foremost engineer !"

At present, John Lantier is one of the

well-to-do contractors of Paris. He is not ambitious to be very rich, and he never will be. He intends to retire from business as soon as he is able to give each of his three daughters a portion of two hundred and fifty thousand francs, and be assured of an income of about twenty-five thousand francs a year for himself.

Twenty years ago, he was a laborer and wheeled a barrow in the service of the Corps of Civil Engineers. He was cheerful and healthy, and earned sixty-seven francs a month after deducting what he allowed to accumulate for a time of need; and since he was a fine-looking fellow, and of good character, he found a good wife, whose dowry was six thousand francs, ready money; she was very pretty, gentle and economical; proved an excellent wife and made him the happiest of men.

Children came, but, while the family increased, his wages remained the same, and trouble was creeping into the household. He had been accustomed to lay by a portion of his earnings, but now he was not able to earn enough to provide for his family, and had to draw on his capital.

"This will never do," he kept constantly muttering to himself, and one fine day he decided to make a bold effort. "I will

trust to luck," said he, and notwithstanding the remonstrance of his wife, who exhorted him to be patient, he returned the shovel and wheelbarrow to his employers.

With a capital of ten thousand francs he started out into the enterprise of contracting for public works, but he soon learned at his own cost that even this calling required an apprenticeship. His first venture swallowed up half of his small capital, but nothing discouraged he kept at work, and, feeling his lack of education, he studied at night, and even expended some of his means for private instruction. After several undertakings, in which he neither made nor lost any money, by a fortunate contract he recovered his lost capital: then risked it again, and at last doubled it.

Lantier was now forty years of age, and the possessor of forty thousand francs on which no one had a claim to the amount of a sou. He had lived well, and neither his wife nor children lacked anything. It was about this time that he became acquainted with Pascal, who was directing the work which he was executing.

The young engineer took a fancy to the contractor, who was an industrious, intelligent and reliable man, in whom all had confidence, although his fellow contractors said

he spoiled the business, because he contracted for anything and executed it at all hazards.

It happened that Pascal did him a good service, and he was odd enough to be grateful. John Lantier had preserved the great veneration he had for the Corps of Civil Engineers ever since he had been in its service. He now transferred all that veneration to Pascal, and it soon broke forth in heartiest praises of the young engineer wherever he went.

The work was completed, but the contractor did not lose sight of Pascal. He often called on him, sometimes only for the pleasure of conversing with him, and sometimes to ask his advice, until, finally, without knowing the why or the wherefore of it, he would have gone through fire to serve the young engineer.

As Pascal's last year of study was approaching its close, he was earnestly thinking of handing in his resignation, and he only hesitated in his decision in order to ascertain how he could realize, to the best advantage, his activity and his skill. A powerful railroad corporation was considering about engaging his services, but while impatiently awaiting its action, John Lantier, without any suspicion as to this matter,

put an end to his anxiety and indecision.

This was at the time of the demolition of Paris, or rather in the very height of the time when whole districts of buildings were being pulled down all over the city. The people were warned to leave, and then populous houses were demolished, new avenues were opened, and new buildings arose as if by enchantment.

Lantier had been thinking of starting in this enterprise of demolition—which was comparatively a modern business—having already, however, its heroes, its dupes and its millionaires. But before he would undertake anything important in this direction, or trust his destiny or his money to a "sealed proposal," he concluded to consult the young engineer, although he was personally sanguine of success, and elated with the prospect of plans which he had imagined, and over which he had meditated much and enthusiastically.

He informed Pascal of his designs; explained the mysteries of the business, which were not as well known then as now, and spoke of its good and its bad sides. He demonstrated that he was well versed in the business; that he had carefully studied all about buildings—how to erect them and how to pull them to pieces, and utilize the

materials—and that he did not intend to venture rashly his forty thousand francs, which had taken forty years to accumulate, in an over-hazardous enterprise. And in fact he had tested the matter on a small scale, having sub-contracted an eighth or a twelfth part of a job, in a few instances, and only regretted, that he had been too timid and cautious. He was therefore confident of success, and in addition felt that he had a peculiar aptitude for that kind of work; in fact no man had ever worked up the debris of demolished buildings so advantageously as he had. He was the first to undertake, on a large scale, the preparation and sale of the old lumber for fuel. He employed twenty men at this work in his large yard near the old barrier of Monceaux, and he daily sold as much as three hundred cords of wood to the wealthy, and thousands of small bundles, at two sous each, to the poor.

Pascal reluctantly gave his attention to a man who was so enthusiastic as to believe that he could double his capital in a year. "But look here, Mr. Engineer," said Lantier, "I will show you how matters stand. The city intends to demolish a certain district in order to reconstruct it: is not that so? It is therefore necessary to pull down

the buildings and to clear the ground. And what is the course pursued? The district is divided into lots of two, four and ten houses, according to circumstances, and the lots are given to the lowest bidders. The contractors send in sealed proposals, and the best conditions are accepted. Now you may rely on this: that when men are acquainted with a business, they soon come to an understanding and will not allow the prices to fall very low; so that when a man has a contract for five or six of these lots, he makes a handsome thing out of it."

"But this requires a great deal of money," objected Pascal.

"Not so much as you may think. The city gives credit and is satisfied with security, corresponding to the leases. But the contractors soon have money enough. Everything belonging to a house—from its gable to its foundation, and from the cellar to the garret—is saleable. When buildings are torn down here, new ones are to be erected, and those who wish to build, purchase at a much lower price the old things which will answer their purposes as well as if new, and eagerly seize the opportunity. The slate, doors, windows, mantles, floors, stairs, and, in a word, all the stone, wood and iron

are worked into the new structures, while the laths are packed in bundles and sold at two sous each, and even the old beams, broken brick and the other rubbish can be disposed of for—."

"But can money really be made at this business ?" interrupted Pascal.

"By bushels, Mr. Engineer, by bushels !" replied Lantier; "and, please, listen to me. You know the grand Joigny; well, he worked with me, but now keeps a carriage; yes, sir, a carriage; he has paid for it and it is his own; and yet he was a stupid, idle fellow, and began business on a very small capital—two sous—which he borrowed. Ah! if I only had a hundred thousand francs instead of forty thousand, and the good fortune to have a partner like you—" Here Lantier discovered that Pascal was not listning, and discontinued his observations.

"Ah ! but this is disturbing my mind," muttered Pascal, as if in answer to some secret thought.

"What ! how !" exclaimed the enthusiastic contractor. "Would you like it ? No, this would be too much to expect. I should then make a fortune in a day. What I most need, is large views. Great transactions frighten me, and I suffer the best opportunities to slide through my fingers.

Then we ought to have acquaintances: most contractors talk with men of high standing to learn what is going on in the world, while I dare not; but, if with you, I would go all lengths. I would go to the Prefect himself and say to him: "you wish to pull down Paris; very well, I will take charge of it, and this gentleman will reconstruct the city much better than any of your architects can do it."

The enthusiasm of the honest man made Pascal smile.

"You laugh," continued Lantier, "but I would do as I have said. It is not enough to pull down; it is equally necessary to rebuild, and this would be your concern. The profits are large; one new house can be made from three old ones; it is no more nor less than this. But enough of this now. You will think on what I have said, will you not ?"

"Hear me," replied Pascal, "I wish to consider this carefully. I can procure the balance of the hundred thousand francs, and it is possible that I might meet your wishes with respect to an association. Come again in three days, and I will give you an answer."

During this time Lantier was on thorns, and, long before the hour on the appointed

day, he called on Pascal, with a heart beating with hope and fear.

"Well," said Pascal, greeting Lantier, as the latter entered his room, "I have reflected, and concluded to unite with you in the business."

Nearly wild with joy, Lantier exclaimed: "Paris is ours!" and in the height of his rapture embraced the young engineer, and then asked his pardon for the liberty he had taken.

It was then agreed that Pascal should go to Brittany to procure his part of the capital of the new firm; while, during his absence, the contractor would collect together his funds, and look up some good jobs, as there was no time to lose.

Both partners showed their appreciation of the value of time. Pascal found that business was prepared for him on his return, and he had scarcely finished his breakfast, after his rest, before Lantier submitted to him a large sheet of paper, on which he had made his calculations, exhibiting the advantage of purchasing half a dozen buildings on Harp Street, which was to be demolished in order to form it into the boulevard of St. Michael. They then agreed to go next day and visit these buildings—which they accordingly did—and spent the entire day in

measuring, calculating and appraising, approximately, the value of these contemplated purchases, and the price which they would give for them. In the evening Pascal wrote out the first bid of the firm of Divorne & Lantier.

They had strong hopes of obtaining this lot, for their offer was low enough. But they had concluded that, in this their first undertaking, they would be satisfied with small profits. And yet, providing they met with no losses, they expected to net about thirty thousand francs.

Having handed in their proposal, they then awaited the result.

Pascal did not feel at liberty to continue to lodge at his partner's, although Mr. Lantier would have been much gratified to have him do so. He therefore began lo look for new accomodations—a tedious affair at best—and, after examining nearly a hundred apartments, he finally selected a small furnished room, not at all adapted to him, but which was very near the Hotel de Ville, and also near his business, which then centered in that locality; for it was under the high roof of the Police Station of the Seine, in a glass covered gallery, one hundred and eighty steps above the street, where the Commissioners of Public Ways transacted

business.

He had scarcely taken possession of his new lodgings, before his old friend Lorilleux, who had just heard of his return, called on him. During the month the physician had been quite anxious to learn what had become of the future husband of his sister. Was he going to return to Paris ? and what did he intend to do ? He was greatly perplexed, and therefore hurried to get the news from him.

As he was entering the apartment, John Lantier was passing out, and brushed against him, but Lorilleux did not notice him, as he was only dressed like a well-to-do mechanic.

"At last," he shouted from the door, "I have found my runaway; the wandering dove has returned; let me shake hands with you;" and, assuming a questioning attitude, inquired:—

"What did you mean by running away in that style ? will you be so good as to inform me ?"

"Oh, most willingly," replied Pascal, especially since there is no possibility of swerving me from my purpose—"

"That is to say," said the physician, "you were afraid of my advice, or too willful to trust to my wisdom. Very well; I am con-

fident that you have made a foolish choice."

"I do not think so," said Pascal.

"Well then clear yourself or defend yourself; I listen" said the physician.

"Well, my dear friend, I am a dealer in old houses, a wholesale mason, a contractor of demolition if you like it better."

"Is it possible !" exclaimed the physician, that you an old pupil of the Polytechnic School—! you are jesting."

"Not in the least, and my partner is that big man covered with plaster, whom you encountered at the entrance. He came for the purpose of telling me that the contract for demolishing nine houses on Harp Street has been awarded to us, and the work on this our first job is to be commenced to-morrow."

He then related to the physician the story of his co-partnership; of his journey to Brittany; of his forty three thousand seven hundred and fifty francs, and of his father's anger.

Lorilleux was as much surprised as if he had fallen from the clouds; and every instant he uttered exclamations of astonishment: "Oh ! Ah !" and finally throwing up his arms in despair, he said: "My dear friend, you have certainly lost your senses, and there is no remedy. Do you think that

life is a romance, and that you have acted like the hero of a sensational tale? When Paul Feval wishes to bestow a benefit on one of his characters, he gives him a million without untying his purse strings, but in real life millions are not acquired so easily."

"Who knows?" replied Pascal with a slight shade of self-conceit.

"It is not advice you need," continued the physician, "but a cold shower bath. You are a poet, and you made a mistake when you went to the School of Engineers—which, by the way, was very far from Parnassus. Could any one have believed this of a mathematician? My poor friend, you do not know anything about life or its difficulties; and I see with great sorrow, that you are on the road to acquire an experience at your own expense. You should have profited by my example."

"This is not very encouraging."

"Alas! no, but it is the truth."

Here, however, the conversation closed. Pascal had already said that it was too late to change his mind, and the physician would not uselessly offend his friend. But Lorilleux was more than ever dissatisfied. This freak of his friend, he considered, had cost his sister forty three thousand seven

hundred and fifty francs, because he regarded the investment as good as lost, and he regretted it. He consoled himself, however, by the reflection that his dearly bought experience would make Pascal wiser and give him more practical ideas. It is said that "past follies are a pledge of future wisdom," thought he, and, therefore, it was better that his thoughtless friend should squander forty three thousand seven hundred and fifty francs before his marriage than ruin himself when he was the father of a family. And, furthermore, he knew that the loss would not ruin him forever, for the heritage he expected from his family would enable him to live comfortably.

Such were the reflections of Lorilleux; and, as misfortunes always have some advantages, he concluded complaisantly that this event would put Pascal under his direction, and so he would redouble his attentions and watch him more closely. In this he was sure Pascal could not escape; whereas, had he continued as an engineer, and been sent out of Paris, he might easily have married without consulting him, and then, what would have become of his project?

From all this we may readily imagine that the physician became the constant

guest of Pascal, and passed almost every evening with him.

"How is your novel getting on?" he would now and then ask Pascal.

"Not so very poorly," would respond the partner of John Lantier.

And indeed, if the enterprise was romantic, its benefits were real. The Harp Street houses had paid less than what was expected, but others had yielded larger returns; two job lots, especially, near Saint-Lazare, had paid them far beyond their calculations.

It is true that these two partners—Pascal the thinker and Lantier the worker—did not spare themselves. From morning till night Pascal was on the move, visiting, writing out agreements and proposals, besetting the commissioners of the Hotel de Ville; while Lantier, knee-deep in plaster, estimated the stones and the beams, without omitting to include the number of pints of wine that would be necessary in concluding the sale of the small articles.

Such activity made Lorilleux think earnestly, and he did not fail to observe the joyful expressions on the countenances of the two partners. Pascal looked with increasing confidence on the business, and, from his calmness and equanimity, any one

would have been convinced that he was sure of success; and as for Lantier he was growing stouter every day.

"He does not deceive me—he is certainly succeeding," was the frequent meditation of the physician; "but is it not wonderful? it is almost incredible! And yet so much the better. Is it not for my sister he is working? and should I not rejoice both as a friend and as a brother-in-law?"

Pascal's parents had, of course, been early made acquainted with the remarkable success of his enterprises. They would not listen to him at Lannion; but he knew that they would read his letters, and he wrote frequently, although the answers came only from his mother. Regularly every week she addressed him a long, tender and good letter—just such as only mothers can write. But as to the father, he was still obstinate in his silence, and seemed to have lost the faculty of writing.

At first, Pascal was much grieved on account of the stubbornness of his father, but gradually became more reconciled to it, knowing that his father would finally relent, and that his indignation would give way in the presence of good and substantial proofs of his success—namely, his first mortgages and his government securities; these

he already possessed, and his business was prospering more and more.

After two years, on taking an inventory of their property, Divorne & Lantier found that each was worth one hundred and sixty-two thousand francs, or as Lantier put it, "every franc piece had become five francs."

Lorilleux was dazzled by this fairy like result, and could scarcely help doubting it, although he said nothing for the figures made it apparent.

"Don't you think you had better stop now," said he to his friend, "rather than risk that which you have been so fortunate in gaining ?"

But Pascal gave no heed to such warnings, except to reply: "that he had not become wholesale mason to drop the business when he was in such a fair way of succeeding," and the physician was obliged to impose silence on that uneasy voice within him which he called prudence.

He consoled himself by the thought that his sister would have a carriage, and he even cherished the idea of availing himself of that carriage occasionally, in order to dazzle the eyes of those of his patients who persistently maintain that "talent never goes afoot."

But Pascal was not yet thinking about

carriages, or, at least, he had never spoken about such luxury, although he had concluded to give up his small apartments—which never suited him—and surround himself with more comforts, since he thought he had worked hard enough to deserve them.

He accordingly hired a neat suite of rooms in the Rue de Rivoli, the windows of which looked out on Saint James Square. He paid for them somewhat more than three times their value; but the fine view, of course, had to be paid for. The prospect was certainly one of the finest in Paris, and at that time was not hidden by those two wretchedly constructed theatres—trifling and pretentious—near which the magnificent tower of Saint James seems to stand as a protest for art and good taste.

Wishing to make some repairs and to embellish the rooms, without having his rent increased or being ordered to leave, Pascal prudently took a lease of the premises. Numerous little items ran up the expenses necessary for him to obtain possession of the apartments to about one-sixth over the price agreed upon; but he would not stand on trifles, and acted on the principle that it is best to conform to the custom of the country in which we live.

He paid his rent six months in advance;

promised the porter that he would submit to the usages of the house; signed the requisite papers for legalizing his residence, which cost him one hundred and fifteen francs; attended to numerous other formalities, and finally had a house. Such is the method of procuring a house in Paris.

He next commenced making alterations. He made the seven small rooms into three, so that he could receive more than two persons at a time, stretch himself without injuring his hands, and sneeze without the risk of damaging the globe of his clock.

The owner allowed him to do as he pleased, intending to make him pay handsomely, in due time, for such waste of property.

Pascal then really did something foolish. He played the Crœsus, and laid out about twelve thousand francs in adorning his rooms with fine furniture, carpets, elegant silk tapestries, and three or four bronzes, such as are not found on all the ornamental clocks of fashionable hair-dressers.

But, most singular to relate, Lorilleux on this occasion seemed oblivious to his role as Mentor, and, far from cautioning Pascal on economical expenditures, urged him to lay out still more. He had calculated that the suite of rooms was commodious enough for a small family, that the expenditure of the

money for furniture was necessary, and that the sooner it was done the better. And if he took an interest in the disposition of the apartments, as to the quality of the furniture, and the color of the tapestries, it was because they were to be furnished for his sister. So strong indeed was this conviction in him, that he prevented his friend from buying a small painting—a masterpiece of Boucher—because its design did not altogether please him, though such an opportunity is rarely offered.

About this time, the rumor that Pascal was immensely rich had reached Lannion. He had jingled his gold; the sound had reached the ears of his fellow townsmen, and in a very short time the whole village knew that Mr. Divorne's son was, without question, a "millionaire."

This incredible news had been circulated by two of his townsmen, who had vainly tried to make their fortunes in Paris. They had returned home no wiser than when they left, and several thousand francs poorer; yet with the conviction that "many are called, but few are chosen." They had needed the assistance of Pascal, and sought him in their hour of need. Estimating the luxury of their townsman by their limited knowledge of the world, these

worthy men had declared to every one that Pascal kept a carriage, and that he lived in a fairy palace. The people would not credit them, until all that they had said was confirmed with further particulars, by a young student, to whom Pascal had at one time lent eighty francs to enable him to attend a masked ball, and at another time a hundred francs to quiet his threatening tailor.

This young man had occasionally been invited to dine at Pascal's, and, having been struck with the splendor of his oak furniture and his bronzes, was incessant in his praise. The students of the University of Paris did not know that there were many articles of furniture made out of old oak and glazed pasteboard; that many of the Florentine bronzes were nothing but galvanized plaster, and, therefore, that this young student—who had been amazed at the luxury and generosity of Pascal—was sincere in those descriptions which confounded his old neighbors. According to his ideas, Pascal was knee-deep in gold and at night slept on a mattress of bank notes.

Pascal was now admired more than he had formerly been reviled, even after making all necessary allowance for these exaggerations. Those, who once shuddered at

the thought of having a son like him, now pointed him out to their children, as a worthy example, while those who had most wronged him could scarcely forgive themselves for such injury, such high treason. Ah! money is a powerful pleader!

A large number of letters was the first and most natural result of this change of sentiment. Some wrote begging to be remembered; others entreated his favor in behalf of their nephews; and others denounced those who had most reviled him, while an alderman ventured to appeal "to his good heart in the name of the poor of Lannion, his birth-place."

Pascal sent to the poor of his native town five hundred francs, but did not reply to any letter. This "royal liberality," however, convinced the people that his fortune had not been overrated. and that he could, by simply writing his name on a piece of paper, give it the value of money; and he was at once proclaimed a millionaire. No one, however, had the indiscretion to inquire how or where he came by such a fabulous fortune. Such questions are asked only in regard to poor devils.

The success of Pascal had added greatly to the importance of Mr. Divorne, who was now held in very high estimation; he was

reaping the advantage of his son's success, some of whose golden rays fell upon him, and the people bowed reverently before the father of so rich a man.

And yet the attorney was the only person who discredited the rumors of his son's success, and called them the "wild talk of a small town."

It was true Pascal had written that he was making money, but, queried the attorney, mentally: "is it probable?" Had he not prophesied that he would be ruined? The prediction must be fulfilled; for a father ought never to be mistaken, and he therefore still looked for the return of his son as a beggar.

Pascal's generous contribution of five hundred francs to the poor, which had become so generally known, had unsettled the conviction of Mr. Divorne; but who could assure him that what he had heard of his success was not false? More wonderful things than this are of daily occurrence. He became uneasy and his mind was much perplexed. His ideas were confused, and he did not exactly know whether to be sorry that he had proved a false prophet, or to rejoice at his son's good fortune, if indeed he had really succeeded.

This state of uncertainty was insufferable

to the attorney, and he decided to go to Paris to ascertain the truth, but was unwilling to speak of his wish. He therefore so artfully managed matters that his wife was made anxious that he should go, and urged him to do so. For the sake of appearances he pretended to be indifferent, and for a time refused, but finally yielding to the entreaties of the distressed mother, announced one fine morning that she had prevailed. But although he appeared to have decided suddenly, he had already made his arrangements for the journey, and started at once; he hoped to surprise his son very much, but in this he was mistaken, because he did not surprise him a bit.

Pascal was taking his ease—talking quietly with Lorilleux, who spent nearly every evening with him—when his father entered. He was not greatly embarrassed, but, on the contrary, he was overjoyed. The visit was unexpected, although he had long waited and hoped for this little triumph, he was truly happy to embrace his father, who, on this occasion, cast aside his habitual coldness and manifested much tenderness, although a witness of his weakness was present.

At a glance the lawyer saw there was

some truth in what Pascal had written, and this made him ashamed of his protracted stubbornness; but he did not indicate it, and only endeavored to show himself amiable and affectionate. And as he wished to know the facts, he thought he would draw them out, by playfully relating to Pascal the rumors which had convulsed Lannion. Pascal smiled at the fertile imagination of his townsmen; but not wishing to keep his father any longer in doubt, he, in a few sentences, told him the amount of his fortune, and that he had an income of eighty thousand francs a year as the result of his diligence for less than two years and a half.

This modest income was far from the millions reported, and comparatively insignificant to the amount stated in the rumors; but to the lawyer it seemed prodigious. Looking back on his own life he remembered that when he was twenty-six years old—just the age of his son at this time—he was nothing but a second clerk in a provincial law-office, with a salary of but one thousand francs a year. All this money of Pascal's, made in so short a time; was in conflict with his preconceived notions, and he could not help expressing the opinion that such an income had been acquired too easily. He exultingly referred to the good old times,

when it took a man twenty years to lay up an income of twelve thousand francs a year. But he did not take into consideration that an income of one hundred thousand francs in that "golden age" was equal to nearly five hundred thousand francs in this "age of iron."

Mr. Divorne was one of that class of men who always maintain that they are right, however strong the evidence against them; and, for the purpose of demonstrating that he was right, by an argument as clear as day, he once more took up his favorite topic, and endeavored to convince his son that he had been very wrong in resigning his position as engineer, and in not acting on the sound advice of a father, whose experience was so much larger than his. But since he only spoke for the purpose of justifying the stand he had taken, there was no bitterness in his words.

"Even if thou hadst the millions thou art supposed to have," said he, "I would still repeat that thou wast altogether in the wrong. I am too firmly established in my principles to be turned from them by thy success; for, although thou hast succeeded, thou shouldst have failed. And then an exception does not destroy a rule, and thou art an exception."

Pascal submitted in the mildest way in the world; for what would be gained by combating opinions more solid than the rock, which the waves of the sea at length wear away? Besides, he would have to deal with two adversaries, his father and Lorilleux, the latter supporting the lawyer, with all his eloquence. Lorilleux had at last found a man who thought as he did, and, having triumphed, he abused his advantage. The attorney and the physician became very intimate at the first interview, and their friendship and esteem for each other constantly increased during the ensuing two weeks. The more they conversed together, the more clearly they understood each other; and the cunning Lorilleux, with rare skill, availed himself of this fine opportunity to settle himself securely in the heart of his friend's father. He even dared to broach, cautiously and delicately, the possibility of Pascal marrying at some future time, and was made the happiest of men when he thought he had ascertained that Mr. Divorne would be indifferent as to the dowry of the woman, whom his son might select for a wife.

The fortnight passed like a dream to the attorney, and he would have been entirely satisfied, if Pascal had only had one of those

titles which have such a fine effect on a visiting card. But he had none; for no man would like the title of *Demolisher*. Mr. Divorne could not help communicating this regret to his son. "If they ask me," said he, "what thou art doing, what answer can I give ?"

"Ah ! my father," replied Pascal, "am I not always an engineer, and, now more than ever, an architect ?"

"Thou art always joking," said the attorney good naturedly. When wilt thou become as serious as Mr. Lorilleux ? He is certainly a steady man and knows what is becoming, and thou art really fortunate in having such a person devoted to thy welfare. It is rare indeed."

Mr. Divorne was also much pleased with John Lantier. It is true he had been surprised to find his son associated in business with a man, on whom a blouse would be more becoming than a dress-coat, but the hearty good nature, and plumpness of the contractor charmed him. And then Lantier had given a great dinner in honor of his partner's father; and the arrangement of the feast, the magnificence of the dishes, the courses, and the excellence of the wines, filled up the measure of Mr. Divorne's amazement, as he had no conception that

such a man—who spent his days in the midst of rubbish and plaster—could at night enjoy so comfortable, not to say luxurious, a home.

But Mr. Divorne, at length, took his departure, having been greatly delighted with his visit, and having secured the promise from Pascal that he would visit his home at Lannion, at least once a year.

"It is certain," said he to his wife, after his return, "our son is in a very good position."

We may imagine the great joy of Madame Divorne at this announcement. "Without doubt," said she to herself, "Pascal will soon think about getting married, and it is my duty to look out for a young lady worthy of such a husband."

Nearly the same thoughts had flashed through the mind of John Lantier. "If I could marry one of my daughters to the young engineer," thought he, "how happy it would be for her, and how honorable to me to have, as a member of my family, a man who has been the most brillant student in the Polytechnic School! Let me see: I have three daughters who will soon be marriageable. They are pretty and well brought up. Upon my word, I will give him his choice."

Thus the liberty of Pascal was threatened from three sides at the same time, and he had no suspicion of it.

CHAPTER IV.

The visit of Mr. Divorne, and two journeys to Brittany to embrace his mother, were the greatest events in the life of Pascal, during a period of six years, which is as much as to say that his life was calm and his habits regular.

All pleasures were within his reach, and he had what many young men have not —money and liberty—but he did not abuse them. No young man had ever lived further from those stupid enjoyments which cannot well be avowed, and towards which rich young men rush so furiously—young men, who are for the most part the offspring of the titled nobility of the last century, and the multitude of absurd dandies, who ape the vices of the princes of foppery only to become ridiculous. Without being the ideal of virtue, Pascal, nevertheless, would have pleased a mother-in-law.

But Pascal was not entitled to all the credit of his exemplary course. A good portion of it was due to Lorilleux, who watched over him with as much anxious care as a mother watches over, not her son, but her daughter. Day and night like an Argus with his hundred eyes, constantly open, the physician looked after his future brother-in-law, and was more vigilant than the dragon which guarded the entrance to the garden of the Hesperides, and which Hercules killed so that he might at once steal the apples, and give an impressive lesson to all future guardians.

Once or twice Pascal had come near making a somewhat serious connection, but it was on this occasion that the physician showed his skill. He was a man who would avail himself of the smallest expedients, the slightest ruse or stratagem that would lead to results, and never recoiled from trifles, if thereby he could frustrate the design of another; and, even if he overstepped the bounds of honesty, he cared but little about it. He felt that he was accountable for Pascal, and he protected him with the conscientiousness of an overscrupulous trustee, and yet with as much adroitness as that of a man who is afraid to awaken any suspicion.

But that which most alarmed Lorilleux

was to see his friend going into society.

The Parisian balls are tapestried with cobwebs woven by mothers anxious to get rid of their young daughters, and thoughtless bachelors attend them and are insnared. They walk in the midst of nets spread for them; and should one of them any evening be thrown off his guard, he is undone. He is pierced with a glance, coaxed, beguiled, made giddy, captured, tied and married before he is aware of what he is doing. He may not have decided to marry, or may not be satisfied with his selection, but, notwithstanding, he has pronounced the fatal "yes."

The physician knew all about these things, if not from his own experience, at least from reliable information; hence he did all he could to prevent Pascal from profiting from some fine acquaintances he had, and who were ready to take him into society; and he brought company to him in order to keep him away from these resorts, where he could not always follow him.

Through his efforts the rooms of Pascal became the centre, the place of reunion of a group of young men of his own age—an agreeable, social circle of good standing—and each one remarkable for some special qualification. Each of them, before his ad-

mission, had passed under the most careful and searching scrutiny of Lorilleux, and none of them had any marriageable sisters.

Pascal allowed him to do as he pleased, and although he understood perfectly well his little stratagems, he gave himself no concern about them. He was, however, far from guessing the real drift of the physician; but, even had he known it, he would not have been alarmed. It is only those who feel that they are too weak to withstand a siege, and sacrifice their will to that of another, that are oppressed with the fear of tyranny. They are conscious of their own irresolution; imagine that they see in everything some attempt on their liberty; are forever wavering between the opinions of Peter and the advice of Paul, and are unpleasant companions. At the slightest word they raise the standard of independence, declare themselves rebels, and then go over to the other side. If they should marry, their wives will wear, under their crinoline, the garment which, people say, belongs to the stronger sex.

Lorilleux had no little revolts of this kind to fight against; for Pascal was too self-reliant to fear the influence of others, and, far from being displeased with his friend, was rather touched by his attentions.

Besides this, the kind of life provided for him accorded with his tastes; for, while he liked society, he disliked to go out; and was never better pleased than when passing the time with four or five good fellows, an event which occurred nearly every evening, to the great annoyance of the porter, who thought it very bad for so many to go up the waxed stairs, especially in rainy weather. At all other times Pascal was absorbed in his business, which was daily increasing in importance. He was equal to everything, and attended to the most minute details. There never was a more active contractor, and he possessed the rare gift of making all around him active. He knew how to recognize zeal in others; he was never parsimonious, and he disdained ruinous economies; hence his workmen did not spare themselves, wasted no time, were confident of double pay for double work, and went to their toil heartily, and sure of reaping some benefits, when completed. Thus it was that he obtained such remarkable results, and that his rivals questioned if he was not something of a sorcerer. They racked their brains to find out this very simple thing, that Pascal knew how to secure esteem, and how to sacrifice a thousand francs to advantage.

After having pulled down buildings, the two partners undertook to rebuild—a very difficult business, in which the most skillful are apt to make mistakes—and in this they were also successful, because they went into it cautiously and with good judgment.

Both Pascal and Lantier knew, without looking over the statistics, that the number of rich people in Paris, as elsewhere, is comparatively small, and they had respect to this fact in their calculations. Unfortunately, the landed proprietors and the rich capitalists are not yet convinced of this disagreeable truth, and their architects only build palaces or costly abodes, with sculptured balconies and marble paved halls: such fine buildings are intended for millionaires, and even attic occupants must have a familiar acquaintance with the bank; it has, however, been a useless trouble and a waste of words to represent to these obstinate persons that they are not doing any good, since there are but few families that can afford over five thousand francs a year for their lodgings.

When, in course of time, those palaces will have no other occupant than a sullen and insolent porter; when the bills of "flats to let" have been exposed to the weather for years without securing a tenant, then will

these saddened proprietors, receiving no income from these buildings, listen to the complaint of their depleted purses. But though they may divide and subdivide their magnificent apartments, they can never turn them into comfortable lodgings, and will still have to let them at high prices. Many will then be ruined; while all will be set to thinking; the building of palaces will be abandoned, and the building of houses will begin.

Pascal and his partner, more modest as well as more prudent, were satisfied to erect comfortable dwellings, suitable for a man of family with an income of less than sixty thousand francs a year, and there are many such. Hence, as soon as they completed one of their buildings, it was immediately rented from cellar to attic at reasonable prices, and yet paying from seven to eight per cent on the investment.

These commodious houses, rented so readily, were also easily sold, and no sooner was one fitted for occupancy, before a purchaser was on hand to buy it. Pascal soon acquired the reputation of a reliable architect, and the capital of the firm augmented daily.

This constant good fortune, which was the result of such good sense and general infor-

mation, was exceedingly annoying to Lorilleux, who could not account for it, and he tried to console himself by repeating the vulgar refrain, with which those who fail to make a fortune stun the ears of the prosperous: "It is all luck."

As for Lorilleux he had not been lucky. He had sowed in patience, but he had not reaped, as he had hoped. Every morning he awoke with some little disappointment, and he daily found out some error in his calculations; but, instead of attaching any blame to himself, he attributed it all to circumstances, as if the secret of success did not consist in controlling circumstances, and turning them to our own advantage.

The physician had dreamed of glory and fortune, but glory and fortune had fled from him, and his name was still so obscure that his most distinguished patient was a retired druggist, who, since he had left the pure and fresh air of the country, had become slightly asthmatic.

Thus the temperament of Lorilleux insensibly became sour and bilious—which is the livery of the envious; he also gradually became tyrannical, sensitive and tedious, putting the worst construction on everything, neither concealing his hatred nor his scorn for men; in every direction he saw intriguers

and cunning fellows more adroit than himself, and he lamented his own want of skill.

But there were other concerns which troubled the sleep, and clouded the brow of the physician. Pascal would soon become a decidedly rich man, and Lorilleux was very much annoyed at the idea that this fortune, acquired so suddenly, had disconcerted his predictions. "Would it not be an obstacle?" thought he. Relying on his own experience, he considered that Pascal, with an income of twenty thousand francs, would be much less disinterested than he might have been, if comparatively poor. He who had once been, for the sake of his sister, overjoyed at every fortunate enterprise of his friend, had now fallen so low as to wish earnestly that he might meet with some failure which would reduce his capital! He reproached himself bitterly for having waited so long, and resolved to unmask his batteries, not all at once, but cautiously.

Unmasking is the right word; for no one had suspected Lorilleux's intentions, and not even his mother knew any thing about them. This profound diplomatist never allowed any thing of his secret to escape, and his sister was as ignorant as his friend of the darling project which he had cherished during fourteen years. And what a secret!

The dream of a life time.

With a prudence superior to his years, Lorilleux had been very careful not to admit his friend to the intimacy of his family, for he had foreseen that marriage between two young people, who had been brought up together, would be almost impossible. Their daily intercourse would result in nothing but a sincere and tender friendship. Through his habitual precaution, Miss Lorilleux and Pascal had only been in company on rare occasions, when the interviews had been managed with infinite art, and they had not spoken to each other more than ten times in all.

The great concern of the physician now was how to bring these young people together—a very serious affair indeed! It seemed to him, however, as if all difficulties were removed, except that sudden fortune.

Pascal was about thirty years of age, and endowed with all those external advantages which captivate a woman.

Miss Lorilleux was eighteen years of age, a brunette remarkably pretty, exceedingly pleasing in her manners, distinguished in her appearance, and indebted to her brother for a more thorough education than women

ordinarily receive. And in addition to this, her far-sighted and exacting brother had applied himself to gain the complete control of her will; increased at pleasure his tyranny, and thus prepared her for the happier days of the future, when she would be under a less severe yoke.

When the physician thought of them both —his friend for whom he had cared so constantly, and his sister whom he loved so tenderly—and saw how perfectly they were adapted to each other, he could not help wondering at, and congratulating himself for, his labors. In his mind they were already married, and he was installed in their household, enjoying his reward and beholding their daily happiness.

Having decided on the disclosure, Lorilleux concluded that he must first and cautiously accustom Pascal to the idea of marriage, and then make him long for it. This was only a question of time; but in this preparatory work, the physician, without knowing it, had two powerful auxiliaries. Madame Divorne did not like the idea of having sought and found an heiress for a daughter-in-law, and, thus far, of having lost her time and care; accordingly, in her letters, she not only eulogized a certain young lady, as the *Pearl* of all Brittany, but

allowed to slip from her pen some delicate allusions to matrimony; John Lantier having the marriage of one of his three daughters in view, kept repeating that a man must be crazy to resign himself to a lonely life, when there were, as every one knew, so many charming young ladies, who had been educated in the most renowned boarding schools—modern establishments where even the dullest girls soon learn to make three toilets a day.

But Lorilleux, having daily intercourse with Pascal, could influence him more directly; and therefore, in order to incline him towards marriage, he had conceived the very ingenious device of pretending that he himself had a fancy to marry. By this means he could say whatever he pleased, and all his hints would be regarded as the effusion of his unsuspicious friendship; and how forcibly he pictured the bitterness of solitude and the sadness of celibacy! And how earnestly he descanted on the delights of marriage—on the pure happiness of two souls that understand each other, and whose union has been sanctioned by the church and acknowledged by the law! Then, he would carefully give the "decisive reasons" which controlled him: "A man," said he, "should marry when he is young, and not be so

foolish as to put off the selection of a companion until his declining years, as do those shameless old scamps, who are less anxious for a wife than for a woman who can attend them in sickness. What do such old men bring to the chaste young women, whom they lead to the altar, in exchange for their treasures of youth and candor? A dead heart, a withered imagination, a worn-out body, a wreck, only the ruin of a wasted life. Their destiny is sad indeed. One must look into those houses, a year or so after marriage, to witness their wretchedness. In England, America and Germany, they are a thousand times wiser than we are. In those countries a man marries the woman he loves, and for her own sake; and we never hear of those shameful negotiations, which, in France, make marriage a mere business transaction, a matter of money, coolly discussed by the notaries and concluded on the basis of a cipher to be added to the sum total. In those happy countries it is not the dowry which allures those who wish to marry; and, therefore, all handsome and amiable young ladies, whether they are rich or poor, find husbands, and only the homely fail to marry, unless they possess some good qualities which overbalance their homeliness."

This was the constant theme of Lorilleux's discourse, to which he gave utterance in the eloquent strains of conviction; and he daily contrived some new form in which to reproduce his pet idea. He was, indeed, quite poetic in his descriptions of the enchantments of the honeymoon; and, judging from his nightly conversations, we are almost led to believe that he consulted every morning some pages of that amiable and ingenious book, which, after having enriched and made famous Legouvé, Senior, has contributed to the literary success and renown of Legouvé, Junior.

To all this idle talk Pascal gave no attention; and when Lorilleux had described the woman of his dreams, that is to say, eulogized his own sister, and exclaimed: "yes, I have fully decided: the day I find such a woman, I will marry," Pascal would innocently reply: "you do well."

In such a moment, it required all his force of character to restrain the physician from asking his friend: "Very well, and you, when will you marry ?" But Pascal had, on two or three occasions, anticipated this question, which was continually suspended on the lips of Lorilleux, and had said: "I will probably marry, as almost every one else does; but I am too young and can wait. I

feel quite contented as I am; solitude does not in any way oppress me; and besides, in these days a wife is a luxury still beyond my means. A man must certainly possess a fortune not to regard the dowry as the first thing to be considered; and yet, as to myself, I wish to be able to select a wife, without much concern about her dowry."

Lorilleux was vexed at the want of enthusiasm of Pascal, but he was enraptured at his disinterestedness, and God knows how he approved his views.

"A wife should owe every thing to her husband," he used to say; but, in his inmost heart, he denounced those women who compelled men to say that "a wife was a luxury, and that a man must be rich to marry." "It is this grievous consideration," thought he, "that peoples monasteries; ten coquettes make a hundred old maids; the example of one woman, who has ruined her husband, makes fifty men swear to live and die single."

Lorilleux's persistency, however, had produced some good results. His assumed mania to marry was the favorite topic of conversation among the friends, who met nightly at Pascal's. He had planted an idea which was already sprouting, and, ere long, it would bear fruit; it would indeed have

been singular, had it not been so; for it is among young people as it was with Panurge's sheep, if one leads, the others will follow.

In the meantime, these young people bantered the physician, and vied with each other in teasing him, under cover of being interested in his views. "Doctor," said one, "I have what you want—a young lady worth one hundred and twenty thousand francs, with the prospect of more. I have seen the record of her parents' fortune at the notary's."

Another would say: "Lorilleux, I have seen the picture of a charming young lady in Badié's show-case, near here; she will suit you. You had better go and ask for her address."

Although contrary to his nature, the doctor would take these pleasantries in good spirit. "By Jove," he would reply, "You all know, of course, my wants: every one knows what a man, well established and who wishes to marry, wants; but the misfortune is that while he may suit the young lady, she will not suit him;" and Lorilleux said in his heart: "All right, my friends, all right; the trainer of a horse may have to lead him a thousand times to the ditch, before he will leap it. You will jump too, though I care

very little what you will do; Pascal will also jump, and this is what I desire."

This machiavelian Doctor had gone so far in his sage course, when one of his friends came to him with a most seductive proposal. Although, at first, he seemed to laugh, this friend had really taken the matter in earnest and had inquired, for a good match for the doctor, among five or six of his old lady acquaintances, who very promptly found what he wanted. He now proposed to introduce Lorilleux to the lady, assuring him that he could see her, without committing himself.

The doctor listened attentively to the details of his friend, but proffered some objections, and finally declined the offer.

"He is very difficult to please," said one of the young men: "we shall never induce him to marry; he has, however, one resource left, if he does not wish to die a bachelor, and that is Mr. de Saint Roch, the providence of the unmarried."

Every one must, at least, have heard of this eccentric and mysterious person, who assumed the title of "The Family Ambassador;" gloried in having been the originator of the "profession of marriage making," and flattered himself in having given marriage a new splendor, while rescuing it from

the debased condition in which it had fallen.

In view of these facts, the suggestion to Lorilleux to address himself to this renowned man occasioned a burst of laughter from all in the room, except the doctor, who remained immovable until it was over, when he said very seriously: "Why not ? but I would, first of all, like to know, if Mr. de Saint Roch has ever married any one."

"What !" replied the author of the suggestion, "have you the audacity to doubt it ? You have never then read a newspaper in your life. Open the first one you see, and you will be satisfied. This celebrated ambassador does not disdain at times to hire the fourth page of each of our five great journals. It is there that he shines in his glory; it is there that he announces to familes that he has, at their disposal, a large assortment of young ladies and widows, from sixteen to sixty years of age, all possessed of the most desirable social advantages—wit, beauty, birth, and embellished with some millions of francs' dowry."

"Oh !" replied Lorilleux, "I know all that perfectly well, and I have read that Mr. de Saint Roch is honored with the confidence of the first families of the nobility, the public officers, the army and the wealthy;

that, even the princely families of Europe are in the habit of soliciting his good offices; that those who address him must write their names legibly; but all this does not convince me. I therefore renew my question: has he ever married any one ?"

"Why, doctor, in Paris alone there are nearly a dozen negotiators of marriages."

"And what does that prove ?"

"That they would not have stores, if they had not customers."

"I have seen stores without customers."

"In other words, my dear Æsculapius, you think that the originator of the profession of matrimony expends a hundred thousand francs a year, on the fourth page of our great journals, only for the sake of his pleasure and glory ?"

This last remark seemed conclusive, and Lorilleux confessed that he was convinced; the conversation, however, continued on the same subject: "Whom had Mr. de Saint Roch married, and when and where? What was his method ?" But no one could answer any of these questions.

At last, one of them said: "now, my friends, I will confess to you a weakness: I have many a time been on the point of writing to Mr. de Saint Roch."

"Good heavens !" exclaimed the doctor,

what for ?"

"Out of curiosity."

"Upon my word," said Pascal, "the same idea has flashed through my mind; that man puzzles me."

To this Lorilleux interposed: "You must not write, but go and see him. That would be more interesting indeed, and more instructive."

"Well then," said Pascal laughingly, "since this is your advice, I will gratify at once your curiosity and mine. I will go and see this mysterious person."

"That is truly a good project," said the doctor, with a shrug of his shoulders; "I will understand you better, if you do."

"Do you see any thing unbecoming in it?"

"Oh ! not at all, if it will amuse you. The only impropriety that I find, is to go and see a man, only for the purpose of laughing at him. This childishness is not becoming to persons of our age."

But this disturber of their gayety was silenced, and all the friends said: "agreed; let Pascal go and reconoitre; and, if he is satisfied, all of us will at once become the clients of Mr. de Saint Roch.

CHAPTER V.

The founder of the matrimonial profession occupied, at the time of our narrative, the entire first floor of a magnificent building on the corner of two of the most beautiful streets in the district, called the Chaussée d' Antin. His apartments contained sixteen front windows, the costly curtains of which gave to the passers by a fine idea of the interior splendor.

The selection of such a house was a masterly stroke. It had two entrances, one on each of the streets, and a flight of stairs, from each entrance, conducted to the rooms of the Ambassador; but a careful inspection would disclose another stairway which led, through a dark passage, to a third street.

In his advertisements, Mr. de St. Roch gave great importance to these three means of exit, as a guarantee of incognito to his clients. He was not vain, and did not desire his patrons to announce themselves with a trumpet; but on the other hand, in order to pave the way, and to serve as a pretext for ladies and gentlemen, a well known milliner occupied the third floor, while a banking office was on the second, where

pieces of coin might be heard clinking, as the visitor ascended the stairs. A very happy presage indeed !

This mysterious building was evidently guarded by a porter, or rather by two porters—from the simple fact that there were two doors—but they remained invisible. From the windows of their lodges no unpleasant countenance was ever seen protruding, or an insolent voice ever heard, demanding of a visitor: "where are you going ?" Such a question might have been annoying.

Signs, gilt letters on a black ground, took the place of the porters and gave better satisfaction. They took the stranger, as it were, by the hand, accompanied him up the stairs, and conducted him where he wished to go—to the banker's, the milliner's or the matrimonial ambassador's.

In this delightful building one could enter from either street as freely as if it were his own house. Thus Pascal entered it. By the direction of the fingers, painted on the wall, he ascended the stairs. At the head of the first flight were three doors, on each of which, in glittering letters, was the name of Mr. de St. Roch.

Pascal rang one of the bells at random, which still vibrated when the door was

opened, and he found himself in the presence of a stately servant, ensconced in more gilt lace than the beadle of a Cathedral.

"Mr. de Saint Roch?" asked Pascal.

"Sir, if you will take the trouble to follow me, I will conduct you," was the very respectful reply of the servant; and, removing the damask curtain, he preceded the young man through a passage, covered and lighted with ground glass; a thick carpet muffled the sound of footsteps.

As he proceeded, Pascal laughed to himself as he thought of the conspicuous advertisements of the marriage agent—which pictured his house in such fantastic colors, with mysterious doors, private staircases, gloomy corridors—and found that everything corresponded to the description; he thought also that the domestics should be deaf and dumb.

The servant finally introduced Pascal into a small saloon, hung with lilac colored reps of the most delicate shading, and said: "Sir, if you will be pleased to sit down, I will notify my master," and, at the same time, touched the knob of a bell three times.

"Will it be necessary for me to wait long?"

With a profound bow, the servant replied: "my master is notified that a gentleman

awaits him in the lilac saloon. My master, sir, will not detain you long ;" and, bowing again, he withdrew on tiptoe, discreetly closing the door.

"The deuce !" thought Pascal, "it appears that there are saloons in all colors. Let me examine this one."

This lilac saloon was, to speak the truth, a little wonder of misapplied luxury, and richness in bad taste. A woman, dealing in fancy toilet articles, would have been dazzled by it. Every thing in it was gilded, from the arms of the chairs to the rose-work of the ceiling. The tapestry of the furniture was hand-embroidered, no two pieces being alike. The carpet was a master-piece of the most grotesque figures, and must have represented the toilet of Madame de Pompadour, or something which the maker alone could define. The remainder was all in keeping. That, however, which gave a peculiar effect to the lilac saloon, was the number of all kinds of paintings hanging on the panels, and the incredible number of little things arrayed on the mantle-piece, on the tables and on the étageres.

Every thing was displayed there: bronzes, plasters, marbles, china and carvings in wood. A bric-a-brac store can alone give some idea of this profusion of art objects.

But what objects of art! Things unheard of, prodigious statuettes that made you tremble, and paintings that made you shudder. One good picture, three passable ones, some bronzes of Barbedienne that might find favor, but, as to all the rest— !

Pascal, astonished, examined this wretched collection; under each object was a label and a motto. One of them read: "To our good friend;" another: "To the author of my happiness;" another: "A souvenir of a happy mother;" and another: "A token of gratitude." These objects of art were evidently gifts, but from whom ?

The subject depicted by the clock was the statue of love, chubby faced, and blowing with all the force of his lungs over a pan of coals. Beneath this Cupid was engraved the motto: "Thus will always be our flame!"

Pascal was lost in revery. He stood amazed before this image of love and flame, when a door was softly opened, and the matrimonial ambassador himself appeared on the threshold.

He was a short, plump, and fresh looking man, whom it was a pleasure to look at. The lilies and roses, sold by the perfumers, blóomed on his cheeks, which were scrupulously shaved. His mouth with a perpetual smile displayed a row of fine white pearls, the

perfection of dental art. His eye showed the sweetest mirthfulness. He was a coxcomb who took the best of care of himself, perfumed, exhaling the most penetrating odors. If he moved or made a gesture, it seemed as if a scent bag had been shaken. He had all the youthful graces of one of Watteau's shepherds.

He seated himself with great deliberation and display. Vestris would have liked him for the style of his tread, for it was that of the god of the minuet himself. His vest, under which was another of a different color, made one think of the First Empire, and he wore a blue swallow-tail, with carved gold buttons. He had given up the knee breeches, but diamond buckles still adorned his pumps of beaver, which enclosed his large feet, and ruffles of mechlin lace half concealed his plump, white hands.

He had a great passion for jewelry. All his person was resplendent as a December night, and he wore rings on all his fingers. When he threw back his coat, every body could see pins, buttons, and studs adorning, like a constellation, his cravat, his shirt bosom and his frills. Chains of gold fell in triple cascades from the folds of his vest. He never carried less than three watches, the trinkets of which could

have made a little museum. He did not wear ear rings, however, but his blonde and curled wig was a marvel to look at.

Such was his radiance, when he made his appearance in the saloon, that Pascal was dazzled. He did not, however, appear too proud of the effect he produced. His vanity on this point must have been already surfeited. But as the surprise of his new client much resembled a greatly exaggerated timidity, he undertook to reassure him, and with an enchanting voice uttered these simple words: "Sir, I perceive that you are in contemplation before my votive offerings."

"Votive offerings!" repeated Pascal, like an echo.

"If I make use of this expression," continued this illustrious negotiator, "it is because all these are the offerings of gratitude. It was while thinking of me that friendly hands embroidered these arm chairs. These bronzes, these paintings are the pledges of an imperishable remembrance."

Pascal bowed. He lacked words to express his amazement.

"Thus," continued the ambassador, in a voice softened with emotion, "I like to surround myself with these pious gifts. They

are my dearest treasures, the most precious reward of my labors; but I assure you that all are not here. I have seven other saloons, as profusely furnished as this one."

"Sir," said Pascal, "I perceive that you must have married a great many people."

"The third of France, or very nearly," answered Mr. de Saint Roch, with an air of modesty. "Many are not aware of it; many have forgotten me."

"Is it possible?" responded Pascal.

"Such at least is the fact. Ah! sir," and the ambassador seemed to be overcome with emotion, "I have met with a great many thankless persons! They have calumniated my purest intentions and have begun lawsuits; but I have the judgments and decrees of the court in my favor, which I have taken the precaution to have printed, together with the speeches of the attorneys. I have the opinions of counsellors which confirm the morality, and the legality of my acts. I still have many—But are not these presents, which you see here, the most eloquent of all pleading, the most glorious eulogy possible?"

"Sir," Pascal attempted to say, "I have never had an idea of contesting—"

"Happily," continued Mr. de Saint Roch, "all are not ungrateful in this world. Be-

hold that little group yonder; it was sent me this morning by a young couple whom I brought together last year. For this painting," pointing to a picture on the wall, "I am indebted to a young man and his wife, whose union I negotiated about six years ago, and it gives me great satisfaction; because they have just had their fifth child, and have chosen me for the god-father. How many couple have preserved my memory within their inmost hearts! They write to me, and give me an account of every happy incident of their lives; and, if there occurs any little misunderstanding in their domestic circle, they call on me as their umpire, and I soon re-establish peace."

"These facts," said Pascal, "are creditable to any man."

"And to a profession also, sir," interposed Mr. de Saint Roch, and continued: "Ah! if time were not so brief, I would undertake, after having kindled the torch of marriage, to keep its flame forever pure and brilliant. And what would be necessary? An insurance bureau to provide for family disagreements, and husband and wife both should submit their grievances to a jury composed of both sexes. After the verdict had been rendered, skillful negotiatiors would influence the one at fault to yield to

reason. But, I beg pardon; I am trespassing upon your time; will you be so kind as to step into my private room ?"

This astonishing man then bowed very low, and, with the flexible grace of a dancing teacher, made way for Pascal to precede him. The private apartment of Mr. de Saint Roch bore a striking resemblance to a laboratory, where any variety of business is transacted. Had it not been so scrupulously free from dirt and dust, a lawyer would have felt at home in it. The servants of the ambassador carefully wiped off the gildings of the numerous paintings, and brushed away every trace of cobwebs.

The ambassador deigned, with his own hand, to proffer an arm-chair to his young client, while he seated himself before a large bureau, covered with documents, and packages of papers tied with red tape.

"Sir," said Pascal, "I have come to see you, because I wish to marry."

"Well, sir, well, very well!" answered Mr. de Saint Roch, "that is a capital idea. Marriage, sir, is the true end of man. I can speak to you about it understandingly, because I have a right to consider myself its renewer. In accordance with the divine injunction, I say: 'take to thyself a wife.' And, if I am not myself the father of a

family, it is because I exercise the functions of a threefold and holy priesthood. I am consecrated to celibacy, and, as a confessor, carry in my heart too many secrets not to dread and flee from the presence of a beloved wife."

"If this is the case, I have full confidence."

"Honesty and discretion, sir, is my motto. Ah! sir, you are right, a thousand times right, in addressing yourself to me. Can you tell me how marriages are usually made? I do not refer to the exceptions. They are by chance, through a friend, a relation, or simply an acquaintance! Old women have a passion for making matches. Oh! these old women! But what guarantee do they give? What assurance? You marry confidingly, with your eyes closed. If you are delicate, they work on your weakness: they promise you mountains of gold, but you get nothing. You are engaged, and a false shame controls you; you are furious, but you dare not say: "No."

Pascal here made a gesture of denial, but Mr. de Saint Roch continued:

"I know there are exceptions; but with me there are never surprises or deceptions. That which honors my actions, sir; that which distinguishes them, is that you can

always verify, through your Notary, the papers and the documents which I furnish; and this you may do, before you engage yourself. Hence my reputation is beyond comparison."

"Very well, sir," interrupted Pascal; "but is it not time to come back to business ?"

"We are now ready for it; but I thought it advisable, my dear sir, to give you these necessary explanations." And here the interrogations began. Pascal was asked his name, profession, family, abode, fortune, character, and other minute details. Nothing was omitted by the ambassador, who made memoranda of all the answers.

When he had concluded his inquiries, he said: "Now, my dear sir, you can sleep in peace; I will find a good match to suit you, and will do it before very long."

"How," responded Pascal surprised, "before very long ? I supposed it would be immediately."

"Oh!" said the ambassador, who appeared greatly shocked, "how very quick you are ! Ah ! impetuous youth;" continued he in a a playful tone, "you believe that marriages are made—"

"I beg pardon, I supposed—"

"That I had in a bandbox some one who

would suit you for a wife? But let us be in earnest. This is Thursday: come next Wednesday, and you will see what I have done for you."

Mr. de Saint Roch immediately arose, and the interview terminated. At this moment a bell tingled four times. "Ah! said the ambassador, some one waits for me in the pink saloon."

"On Wednesday then," said Pascal, as he passed toward the door.

Mr. de Saint Roch stopped him with his hand upraised, saying: "Not that way, not that way; no indeed; you might meet some one. My house is arranged so that no one can meet another. I can receive twenty different persons in it at once, and yet each would think he was alone. Come this way;" and, opening a door concealed by tapestry, he committed Pascal to the care of a servant, who conducted him to the street by an obscure passage.

On the evening of this visit, Pascal related the adventure to his friends, without omitting the slightest incident. No narrative was ever better received; but this was only the first act, and each of his hearers urged the young engineer to go on with it. Lorilleux himself, who had been greatly pleased with the matrimonial exhortation of

Mr. de Saint Roch, joined in the request.

Pascal, accordingly, kept his appointment. On his second visit, he was requested to wait in an apple-green colored saloon, which was similar in all its appurtenances to the lilac saloon, except in the color. But he had not time to become impatient, as Mr. de Saint Roch presented himself almost immediately.

But how different this reception from the former! Pascal was received as a son, who had been looked for with eagerness. The ambassador certainly gave him a very warm reception, saying: "Well, well, I have thought of you. You are a very honest young man and I congratulate you. Why do not all my clients resemble you?"

"How do you mean? In what?"

"You are altogether too modest, my dear child. You have concealed from me a part of your fortune. Why did you tell me that your father had an income of only ten thousand francs, and possessed an office worth forty thousand? His office is worth ninety thousand francs, and his income nearly twenty thousand francs. His farm at Kerpris yields to him twelve thousand francs a year. He has near Guingamp magnificent tracts of timber, and wide meadows along the Trieux.

No man could be more astounded than

Pascal, at the recital of these details: "What!" thought he, "a stranger knows, better than myself, my own affairs? Where the deuce has this man procured such information?"

"This is not all," continued the founder of the bureau of matrimonial alliances; you told me that your personal fortune was three hundred thousand francs. You possess much more than this. Dr. Lorilleux has frequently said that you possess double this amount: and your partner, Mr. Lantier, estimates you to be worth four hundred and fifty thousand francs."

"Zounds!" ejaculated Pascal, "how do you know all this?"

"Ah! ha!" said Mr. de Saint Roch, laughingly, "I have ways of finding out these things."

"Sir!"

"Don't get angry. Do you think I marry people without knowing what I am doing? This would be a bad business indeed! I wish you to understand that I do not overlook any of the details in connection with my clients. I know all the particulars of your life better than even your best friend, Dr. Lorilleux. Thus, I could tell you what you have concealed from him: why you handed in your resignation six years ago."

"Oh! as for that—"

"Now, my dear sir, you resigned because you were about to be nominated for an appointment out of Paris, and at that time you would not leave the city on any account. A love affair—"

Pascal's whole face flushed. He was slightly alarmed. "How is this ?" thought he. "This man must be a sorcerer, or an employee of the Prefecture of Police." He now regretted having gone so far, and was almost angry.

"I know that all that has long ended," said Mr. de Saint Roch. "Besides, you need not be at all uneasy. My house, as I told you, is a confessional. Afraid of the immense responsibility which rests on me, I have always been too discreet even to train a pupil. I will carry my secrets with me to the grave; practice, notes, correspondence, titles, all will die with me, and then the matrimonial profession will fall back into infancy and dishonor."

These last words were pronounced in a faltering voice, his painted face exhibiting profound regret.

Pascal knew not whether to laugh, or to be angry: "Is he a quack, or a man of conviction? What a comedian !" thought the young man. Gradually, however, the

habitual smile returned to the lips of this peculiar person.

"Now, let us speak of yourself," said he. "You are a fine looking young man, wealthy, lively; you can be married very easily, and the business will soon be transacted. Answer me as you would your confessor—Do you wish to marry as a speculation? Do you wish much money?

"Money is a good thing; I do not despise it, but I wish to love the woman I marry," said Pascal.

"Very well, you are right; sometimes I am compelled to lend myself to speculation, but this always pains me. We will therefore speak of a fortune corresponding to your own, and of a woman whom you can love."

"You have expressed my wishes."

Mr. de Saint Roch arose, and taking an enormous register opened it on his desk.

"I have in this," said he, striking the book, "the richest fortunes of France, and of other countries, supported by their documentary evidence."

Pascal advanced to get a glimpse of this repertory of all these heiresses of Europe.

"You may look," said the ambassador, "but you will not understand any thing in it. All my records are written in hieroglyphics,

of which I alone have the key."

While so speaking, he turned over the leaves briskly, saying: "One and a half million francs—this is too much; one hundred thousand francs—not enough. In the first case, one must be a noble, at least a baron; in the second, a military man. There are some odd parents! Ah! I have it, perhaps; one million ready money, a widow fifty three years old."

"Much obliged," interrupted Pascal.

"Let us look farther," continued Mr. de Saint Roch. "Here the party wishes that the husband shall continue to direct a manufactory—This young lady insists that her future husband must not smoke—and asks that, while she is penniless! This other will only marry a man of light complexion, and you are dark: she has, however, a fine fortune, and is one of my best clients, having married three times, and always through my care; she is twenty-nine years of age, has five children—"

"Proceed;" said Pascal.

"Here, perhaps, is one that will suit you; her dowry is two hundred thousand francs: she is eighteen years of age; has received an excellent education; her parents are honorable."

"She might answer."

"So much the more, since I have only named the ready money. There are bright prospects, very bright, magnificent. Her mother, whose health is deplorable, is advanced in years—you understand—and all the fortune is on her side. As to the young lady, she is very fine looking indeed; imposing, well made, of light complexion; but, if I must speak the truth, I believe she is of unequal temper; servants never remain longer than two months in her house."

"The deuce!"

"Yes; when one marries, it is for a longer period. The parents exact that their son-in-law shall live with them—"

"Then, I thank you; and, moreover, I must confess that I do not like blondes."

"Very well, said Mr. de Saint Roch, and continued his review. "Ah!" he exclaimed: "this time I have hit it. The young lady is charming and of dark complexion. She is twenty years of age and has never been at a boarding school; her education, however, is excellent. Her mother is somewhat exacting, but the young lady has the best of temper; she is amiable, lively, sprightly, perhaps a little childish, but not a coquette, and she knows how to keep house. Her father is an old manufacturer of Roubaix, who retired from business three

years ago; a good and excellent man, and by no means troublesome. He is possessed of a great fortune indeed—in real estate, believe me, nearly a million—and his daughter will have some day five hundred thousand francs."

"Let us stop here," said Pascal, "it will be difficult to find any thing better."

"That is so," said Mr. de Saint Roch, "the young lady will certainly please you. I cannot, however, warrant over fifty thousand francs, as her dowry; her father is rather close."

"That is of little consequence," said Pascal. "I have told you my preference; I will not exact too much. And now, what is this young lady's name? When can I see her?"

"Patience," said Mr. de Saint Roch; "you will know her name in due time. It will not be long, before you are introduced to her. There remains but one formality to fulfill—the simplest in the world." Mr. de Saint Roch then presented a small piece of paper to his new client, begging him to sign it. It obliged Pascal to pay over to Mr. de Saint Roch five per cent of the dowry, the day after his marriage with Miss —— (a blank space being left for the name.)

"Ah! this paper shows his true aim! Shall

I sign it? Pshaw! I do not believe it will ever cost me a sou," were the thoughts of Pascal, as, in his most beautiful penmanship, he wrote his name at the bottom of the paper.

Mr. de Saint Roch, in turn, took the pen, and placed his signature by the side of Pascal's, and then he wrote the name of Antoinette Gerbeau, in the blank space of the contract.

"Antoinette!" said Pascal; "I like the name very well."

"It is a good omen," graciously replied Mr. de Saint Roch, and continued: "you will soon hear from me." He then conducted his client to the door with the same formality, as at the previous interview.

The details of this second visit were still more enlivening to the friends of the young engineer, except towards the close; because the signing of the document did not at all commend itself to them. The man of business appeared too visible under the blue dress of the marriage commissioner. Nearly all those young men affirmed that they certainly would not have left their signatures in the hands of that mysterious man, and declared that Mr. de Saint Roch should never have their patronage.

Lorilleux availed himself of these expres-

sions to return to his favorite topic, and to repeat with more assurance, that this ambassador had never married any one. All shared in his opinion, and, since he still continued to show a desire to marry, they urged him to address himself elsewhere.

CHAPTER VI.

Three days had passed since Pascal had greeted, as he supposed, for the last time, Mr. de Saint Roch; and, during all this while, he had thought but little about the matrimonial ambassador. But on the evening of the third day, on reaching home, his servant handed him a letter which had been left in the morning. Pascal took it and read:

"DEAR SIR:

I have just received notice that an excellent opportunity is presented for you to see Miss Gerbeau. My excellent friend, the Chevalier de Jeuflas, will call this evening, at precisely nine o'clock, to accompany you to a ball, where you will meet this young lady. I shall be distressed,

if my letter does not reach you in season, for you may not very soon have a similar opportunity, as the young lady goes out so seldom.

I beg you, dear sir and client, to believe me

Your most devoted friend,

J. D. DE SAINT ROCH."

"The deuce!" said Pascal to himself, "at nine o'clock! I have only time to fly, if I would avoid this Chevalier," for it wants only a few minutes to nine."

But at this instant, the servant announced: "the Chevalier de Jeuflas."

The Chevalier was a man of the best society, courteous, refined, and accomplished. It would have been difficult to assign to him any age. He must have been between thirty and sixty-five. It was apparent that he had an excellent tailor; two or three decorations, one of which was of a light chestnut color, dangled at his breast. In his speech he lisped slightly.

Mr. de Jeuflas was not at all embarrassed in introducing himself to a stranger. He greeted Pascal courteously, saying: "Sir, a friend of mine, who has a peculiar regard for you, has told me of your desire to go into society. I will consider myself highly honored to introduce you—who are

so accomplished a gentleman—into the few houses in which I am received."

The Chevalier's posture, gesture and tone were faultless. Pascal observed all this, while confusedly offering his excuses. He explained that, having reached home only a few minutes before, he had not known of the coming of the Chevalier, until the instant of his appearance. In fact, he was not only perplexed, but he hesitated about accompanying this friend of Mr. de Saint Roch. "I am not ready, sir," he said, "and I should fear to abuse your courtesy."

"Oh! let not that disturb you," replied the Chevalier, "we are not pressed for time, and I can wait your convenience."

Curiosity triumphed, and Pascal, after a little further ceremony, decided to go with Mr. de Jeuflas. At the same time, however, he thought that, while he went to dress himself, his visitor might get impatient; he therefore offered him cigars, which the Chevalier declined, confessing that, though he liked a good cigar occasionally, he never smoked when he was going into a saloon where ladies were.

While dressing, Pascal said to himself: "where the deuce does Mr. de Saint Roch fish up such associates? He is, however, a very fine gentleman; only gentlemen and

hair-dressers are left nowadays who refrain form the use of tobacco, when they call on a lady; evidently the Chevalier is a nobleman. Well, the plot is getting complicated; no matter."

The Chevalier had his carriage, and, when seated by the side of Pascal, he said: "This evening we will go to the residence of an old magistrate, one of my most influential friends, who gives three or four dancing soirées every winter. It is a nice and agreeable house, where, I am sure, you will be pleased."

Judging from the manner in which the mistress of the house received him—on being introduced by Mr. de Jeuflas, as one of his best and oldest friends—Pascal perceived that the Chevalier was much esteemed, and, still more, loved. And to this singular recommendation Pascal attributed such a friendly and gracious welcome, which is usually reserved for favorite guests.

As to the house, it was really as this associate of Mr. de Saint Roch had described it.

Pascal was relieved of much uneasiness. He had not feared an affront, but he had been in great apprehension of being taken to some doubtful resort.

"After this introduction, Mr. de Jeuflas took his new friend aside, and, in the most

disinterested tone said: "See yonder," indicating the direction with a motion, "in the seat very near the window, that pretty young lady, in the first tier, the third beyond the curtain—yes, there. Do you not think she is bewitching? Her name is Miss Antoinette Gerbeau. I think very much of her father; her mother is the most perfect pattern of all virtues. I am one of their most intimate friends:" on saying this, he left the young man to his own reflections.

Pascal would have been difficult to please, if he had been of a different opinion from the Chevalier. Miss Gerbeau was certainly an admirable young lady; thick dark hair set off her face, giving it a charming expression, and enhancing the whiteness of her complexion; her mouth was restless and smiling; her great black eyes sparkled with mischief and gayety. At this time a waltz was in progress, and she doubtless regretted that she was seated. Now and then she turned to her mother, behind her, as if to reproach her for having deprived her of a great pleasure!

"Mr. de Saint Roch has not deceived me," thought Pascal. But at this moment, in the presence of this most beautiful young lady, the recollection of the matrimonial ambassador made him uneasy. He would have

gladly forgotten him entirely, and wished that he had been indebted to chance alone for the privilege of admiring such a perfectly beautiful creature.

"I will, however, go and invite her to dance," said he to himself; and making a tour close to the seats of the saloon, so as not to interfere with the dancers, he reached the place where Miss Gerbeau was seated.

She was engaged for all the quadrilles, except the next one. Nobody had thought of asking her, as every one supposed she had been engaged. She was apparently uneasy on this account, and so Pascal was heartily welcomed—not because he was either particularly witty or handsome, but because he was the wished for partner.

Pascal did not care for dancing: he thought the modern quadrille was a ridiculous amusement, and yet he felt that the one he had danced with Miss Gerbeau was too short. It is true that he would have been greatly embarrassed to give a reason for it. His conversation with the young lady had not been very interesting. Between the figures, he had whispered a few airy nothings, which gentlemen are in the habit of saying, and Miss Gerbeau had murmured a few monosyllables—that was all.

And yet, when the orchestra ceased, Pas-

cal desired to cry out "encore!" though he was quite out of breath, having repeated the ritornellos, selected from the opera in vogue, or for some of Beaumann's melodies. He conducted Miss Gerbeau to her seat by the longest route, for the pleasure of feeling her leaning upon his arm, and on the way he begged her to dance a mazurka with him, since she was engaged for all the quadrilles.

"I do not dance the mazurka,, sir" said she, with an air slightly touched with melancholy.

"I beg of you," insisted Pascal, "to allow me to solicit this favor in the presence of your mother; I am sure she will not refuse me."

She raised her eyes to Pascal, and blushed, on perceiving that he had guessed her wish. She greatly desired to dance this enticing mazurka, but her mother was opposed to it inflexibly. In a very low tone, having but little hope in an attempt which had frequently failed, she said: "I would like it very much." Our friend Pascal was indeed very eloquent in pleading his cause with Madame Gerbeau, and he carried off her consent easily. This was, however, no slight matter with her, because she had fixed principles, and did not surrender them

willingly. Up to that day she had affirmed, as all knew, that her daughter never, never should mingle in those unbecoming dances, in which a young man is permitted to encircle with his arm the waist of a young lady.

Yes, she had affirmed it, and declared it from the "house top;" it was the first article in the maternal charter, made the first time she ever took her daughter to a ball, and that all the world knew. When, therefore, Miss Antoinette was seen dancing the mazurka with this fine looking young man, whom no one knew, every one thought there was something going on, and that the happy dancer would be the future husband.

Pascal acted like a hero; he danced several quadrilles with other young ladies, hoping thereby to deserve another mazurka; but, at about two o'clock in the morning, when he looked for Madame Gerbeau to gain her second consent, she had disappeared. His disappointment was intense, and he regretted all the exercise he had taken for nothing. He now remembered, for the first time, his introducer, and had some trouble in finding him; but finally discovered him in a saloon where they were playing. The Chevalier de Jeuflas was seated at an écarté table and was winning. He was no longer the

same cool man. His face expressed an impassioned, though restrained joy. His glance was brilliant and darted forth vivid rays, as the gold was heaped up before him.

"I now see the secret," said Pascal to himself; "this man is a gambler. It is by this means that Mr. de Saint Roch holds him. Wretched man ! what a servitude !"

The Chevalier, on seeing his protégé, made him a friendly sign, and appeared to say: "wait a minute." From this moment, his mind was no longer on the game; his countenance assumed its former calm expression; his eyes became dull, and, as soon as he could leave the table, he arose and joined Pascal.

"Well, well !" asked he, not without some anxiety, which was perceptible in his eyes.

"I am delighted," replied the young man, bewitched and under a charm. "Never before have I seen so charming a young lady."

"She is very charming indeed !" said the Chevalier, with a satisfaction as apparent as his anxiety, and continued: "Well, well, I would have wagered it. Do you wish me to introduce you to her father, who, as I told you, is a particular friend of mine ?"

"I would like it very much," replied Pascal, "but I believe the ladies have left."

The Chevalier drew out his watch, and remarked: "It will soon be three o'clock; it is really too late; these ladies always leave at two o'clock. Madame Gerbeau is inflexible, except towards you. It must be that you pleased her very much.

"How !" asked Pascal, "that mazurka ?"

"If you were acquainted with her, you would appreciate the great favor she conferred, in granting you that mazurka. But, tell me, are you unoccupied for the morning?"

"Why ?"

"I will have you breakfast with Mr. Gerbau."

"I am free as the air," replied Pascal.

"Very well; to-morrow, or rather to-day, at eleven o'clock precisely, be walking in the *Passage* Jouffroy, where I will meet you, as if by chance," said the Chevalier.

"I will be there, rely on it," said Pascal.

At three minutes past eleven o'clock, Pascal was walking for the second time in the *Passage* Jouffroy, when he saw in the distance the Chevalier de Jeuflas, giving his arm to a man about sixty, with a very prosperous look and a benign countenance. It was Mr. Gerbeau.

The Chevalier appeared delighted to meet his friend, and stated to him that he

had gone this morning to draw his old friend Gerbeau from his occupations, and, in brief, invited him to go and breakfast with them. Pascal accepted, with evident pleasure. On the way, although the distance was short, Mr. de Jeuflas, found the means of whispering in the ear of Mr. Gerbeau Pascal's entire biography, so that when they reached the door of the restaurant, the manufacturer knew that he was to breakfast with a charming young man, as remarkable for his manners as for his ability; an old pupil of the Polytechnic school; belonging to an honorable and wealthy family, and possessing a personal fortune of four hundred thousand francs.

The Chevalier said all this between two whiffs of his cigar, for he smoked in the morning. His words certainly were not lost. The fruits had not yet been served, before Pascal had captivated the father of Antoinette. When the coffee was served, the conquest was complete.

Mr. Gerbeau, a very skillful manufacturer, was only a passable *connoisseur* of houses. For the last eighteen months, he had been involved in a bad enterprise. Suddenly seized with the passion for building —a passion which has troubled the brain of so many unfortunate persons of indepen-

dence—he, in an evil hour, determined to sell the property he had in Saintonge, in order to purchase land in Paris. On this piece of land, acquired through other parties and at a very high figure, he had had the no less unfortunate idea of erecting buildings. For persons without experience, a house in the progress of erection is something beyond their comprehension, and they can form no just estimate of its expense. This was the condition of Mr. Gerbeau, who instinctively imagined that he was robbed. But by whom? How? He was most uneasy, because he had the vague conviction that it is with speculation, as it is with the gear of a machine; if your finger is caught in one of the wheels, you must soon suffer the amputation of your arm, unless you prefer to have your whole body follow the finger. In speculation one check leads to another and the capital is soon exhausted.

Mr. Gerbeau related his misfortunes to Pascal, who promised to extricate him, at a sacrifice, if absolutely necessary, but by making the loss as slight as possible.

He made his word good, and after eight days of running hither and thither, of proceedings, and calculations, the young engineer enabled the manufacturer to see clearly into his business. This little experi-

ence cost Mr. Gerbeau fully sixty thousand francs. He saw, with a shudder, the depth of the abyss into which he had come so near falling; he understood that, without Pascal, he would have been ruined, and his gratitude was great.

All these proceedings, and the necessary course to be pursued, obliged Pascal to visit Mr. Gerbeau very often after their first interview. He was repeatedly invited to dine with the family, and thus had frequent opportunities of seeing Miss Antoinette; far, however, from losing his first impression, he was more and more captivated by her charms.

He found in this family the odor of honesty, happiness and comfort, which recalled to his mind the sweet memories of his own family. He imagined his own mother in Madame Gerbeau, who was dignified, without rigidity; tender, without being feeble. In a word, he felt that he loved Antoinette.

And, just at this point, he desired very much to see the matrimonial ambassador descend into the grave, and buried with all his secrets, titles, acts and registers written in hieroglyphics. The shadow of the impressive and paternal Mr. de Saint Roch—more terrible and more painted than that of

Jezabel—pursued him. He did not wish to curse him, because, after all, it was to him he owed his acquaintance with her whom he loved, but, oh! how willingly would he have annihilated him! He now remembered his signature, in very legible characters, at the end of an agreement. This agreement stood out before his eyes in characters of fire; it seemed to him as if it were a compact with the devil. And, as to that terrible Chevalier de Jeuflas, he was another demon, another cause of remorse, and, perhaps, appeared more frightful to him, because the ambassador but seldom left his splendid apartments, while he met the Chevalier at every step, and he was a friend of the family in which he would enter. Would he not assist at the marriage? On that day, doubtless, a devilish smile would play on his lips.

Oh! how freely would Pascal have given the half of all his possessions, had he become acquainted with Antoinette, without ever having known either of these accomplices to the agreement! He had no one to whom he could go with his troubles, no one to consult. Not for all the world would Pascal have wished his best friend Lorilleux to know the situation. He trembled at the simple idea that any one should ever learn

that he married through the agency of Mr. de Saint Rock.

It was, however, necessary for him to decide, and he confessed to Mr. Gerbeau that he was in love with his daughter. The manufacturer was delighted with this avowal, and asked only for a few days in which to consult his wife and daughter.

The answer was favorable, and, three days after his declaration, he was permitted to pay his addresses openly to Antoinette. But to whom was he indebted for this prompt decision, which crowned the dearest wish of his heart? To the Chevalier de Jeuflas, who, to save time in looking up references, had answered, by his own head, for his young friend; to the Chevalier de Jeuflas, who, through one whole afternoon, closeted with Madame Gerbeau, had sung the praises of his protégé—having entered into the most minute details, so important to a mother greatly concerned for the happiness of her daughter; to the Chevalier de Jeuflas, who had related to her the daily life of the young engineer; to the Chevalier de Jeuflas, who had spoken of the family of Pascal as if he had been acquainted with it for the last twenty years, and who had drawn the most flattering and accurate portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Divorne. It is

very true that the Chevalier had only spoken the truth, but the idea of owing his happiness to such a man! To be his accomplice! —because, after all, he had actually lied, since he had advanced ideas of which he was not confident, facts of which he was ignorant—what a torture, and what a shame!

Pascal did not exactly know whether he was enraged, or at the height of his joy.

CHAPTER VII.

For fifteen days Pascal, who was proverbially domestic, did not occupy his apartments. His friends called, but did not find him. The servant invariably had the same answer: "My master is out, and will not return to-night." John Lantier sought his partner in vain on business which, he said, would not admit of delay.

Lorilleux was lost in conjectures, and dying from anxiety.

This could not last long, and one evening Lantier and Lorilleux, intent on the same purpose, waited for Pascal in his apart-

ments, until after ten o'clock. John Lantier, urged by his wife, wished to speak to Pascal about one of his daughters; Lorilleux was waiting to invite his friend to come the next day and dine with his family, intending to present him to his sister again.

Pascal made his appearance at eleven o'clock, and was radiant. He had passed the evening with Miss Antoinette, who had not answered "*No*" to a question which he had dared to propose in a low tone. He had returned with the full determination of writing to his family for the necessary consent, and of boldly proclaiming his engagement. This was the best way of diverting all suspicion, if any had arisen.

He was thus leaving Mr. de Saint Roch and the Chevalier de Jeuflas in the back seat, where they ought to remain. The constructions of Mr. Gerbeau sufficiently accounted for Pascal's frequent visits to the family. Business intercourse is very often the prelude to a good and sincere friendship.

"This is fortunate," exclaimed Lorilleux, when the Engineer appeared; "We have been waiting for you two hours. To get a sight of you has become exceedingly difficult. But you look splendid; with what Prince have you dined? I did not know

you were so dressy."

Pascal, from his first intercourse with Miss Gerbeau, had, in fact, given great attention to his wardrobe.

"It is certainly necessary," said he in a gay manner, "to take interest in one's toilette, when a person wishes to make conquests, and he must, as far as possible, dress like a conqueror. How do you like my warlike accoutrements ?

"Conquests ! conqueror !" stammered Lorilleux.

"Certainly," said Pascal, "you will not get angry, because I have adopted the ideas which you have so long been repeating to me; but, by the way, have you discovered, during the last fortnight, your ideal young lady ?

The physician had the presentiment of a horrible misfortune, as he answered; "No, not yet; to find such a woman, as I wish, is no easy matter."

"So think I," said John Lantier; "it is like hunting for an eel in a sack of snakes."

"You are both too difficult to please," retorted Pascal; and, since I did not pursue a chimera, I have found what I wanted. I hope I have caught the eel, as John Lantier says. But, to be brief, my friends, you are the first to be informed that I am about to

marry. It is settled."

This news was like a blow from a club to the two friends.

John Lantier sank heavily in an arm-chair. Lorilleux stood petrified—more immovable than Lot's wife, after she was turned into a pillar of salt—and paler than his own white cravat. Pascal looked at them with astonishment. "Ah! how is this? The news of my marriage does not seem to please you," said he: "I presumed, however, that you would share in my happiness, and I expected your congratulations."

"You are not jesting then?" inquired John Lantier.

"Jest!" exclaimed Pascal: "I hope, before three weeks are over, we shall celebrate the wedding; and I count on you, my old friend Lantier, to make one of the party. After my marriage, we will think about building a charming little house for myself, in which we will have a fine house-warming, before winter comes.

"I will do any thing to please you," said the contractor with a sigh; "I had come," he added, "to speak to you about a business which I have, or, rather, which I had in view, but, as there is nothing urgent about it, and, moreover, it is now getting too late, it will be better to defer it." Then,

bowing to Lorilleux, who was not looking at him, he shook hands with Pascal and went out, his heavy tread being heard on the steps which, too hours before, he had ascended briskly and joyfully.

At the same time Lantier went out, Pascal passed into another room, leaving Lorilleux alone. The physician, after a while, awoke from his revery, but it was to abandon himself to one of those spasms of cold rage, known only to men of his organization.

"Bile, not blood, rushed to his head in serried waves, choking and blinding him. With a single word, Pascal had just overthrown the laborious edifice of his life, and he was buried under the ruin. "All is lost! No more hope !" these were the words which sounded in his ears, and redoubled his fury. He felt capable of the greatest crimes. Oh! how he hated at that moment the man who, but yesterday, he called his friend! In a few minutes, his rage had assumed frightful proportions.

"The wretch!" said he, in a low cavernous voice, with closed teeth; "the scoundrel! thus to betray our friendship! Ah ! but he will pay dearly for the horrible sufferings he has brought on me. The happiness of his life will not compensate for them!" And

he walked up and down the room, with the feverish agitation of a madman, his eyes glaring like those of a fierce tiger pacing his cage. With what pleasure would he have stabbed Pascal! But he would seek for, he desired, a more refined vengeance.

This furious paroxysm was more than the physician could endure, and, after a few minutes, he was compelled to sit down. His anger, however, had not diminished, for he was a man that would keep it alive for years; but he gradually recovered his calmness which threw on his contracted countenance its usual mask. He was reflecting, while he mechanically crumpled some papers on the table before him.

All at once a name at the bottom of a letter attracted his attention—a name which explained to him the enigma of Pascal's conduct. "A letter from Mr. de Saint Roch!" he cried, and he read the note which that matrimonial ambassador had written to Pascal, announcing the coming of one of his friends.

The date of this letter, which corresponded so perfectly with the disappearance of Pascal, was to Lorilleux a better clew, than the longest and most detailed explanation.

"There can be no doubt," thought he, "that it is Miss Gerbeau that he will marry.

If I required further assurance to satisfy me that I am not mistaken, Pascal himself will soon give it to me. To marry through the intervention of Mr. de Saint Roch! It is horrible!" After a moment's consideration, he murmured: "But all is not yet lost! I can ward off this terrible and unforeseen blow." And, obeying a sudden inspiration, which threw a ray of joy over his pale face, he took a pen and prepared to write.

At this moment, Pascal's voice was heard in the adjoining room, saying: "Well, well, Doctor; will you not come in here to warm yourself? It is too cold for a wolf in that room. It will be by far more pleasant here for chatting. Come and bring the cigar box."

"I will come presently," cried out the doctor: "let me finish a letter."

Lorilleux wrote not only one letter, but two. This is the first:

"DEAR DIVORNE:

If you wish to prevent an irreparable misfortune, hasten here, without losing a moment. Your son has fallen into the hands of a Mr. de Saint Roch, a marriage broker, whom you possibly know by name. He is going to make him enter into a family despised by all honest people; he is going to make him marry one of those young ladies who cannot find a husband. Pascal is

deeply and blindly in love. He has concealed himself and still hides from his best friends, whose representations, however, would be useless. You know your son's stubbornness, and you alone can save this unhappy young man from shame and despair.

ONE OF YOUR FRIENDS."

"P. S.—It may be expedient not to show this letter to your son. Come as quickly as possible."

The second letter was addressed to Mr. Gerbeau, in these words :

"DEAR FRIEND :

Receive my sincere congratulations. You are a father and a jovial fellow, free from prejudice. You give your daughter to a man who has been introduced to you through Mr. de Saint Roch, the skillful marriage agent, and Antoinette will certainly be happy! You must feel great pride in having for your son-in-law a young man enriched by doubtful speculations—if he is indeed rich, which I doubt. You will be still prouder when you learn that Mr. Pascal Divorne was expelled from the School of Engineers. Apply to him for the reason. So, my poor fellow, prepare your dollars for the dowry.

As you may not believe me, I send you,

in proof, an autograph letter of the illustrious Mr. de Saint Roch.

Your best comrade congratulates you. When will the wedding come off ?

_____ _____"

In this second missive, Lorilleux carefully enclosed the note aforementioned of Mr. de Saint Roch. After folding the letters, he addressed the first and went into Pascal's room to ascertain the address of the second. The physician was as happy as a man who had just seen a tile fall and dash to pieces only two steps ahead of him, and which seemed as if it would inevitably have struck him on the head.

"Well, well ! Will you now that we are alone—you terribly sly fellow—will you tell me the story of your love ?" asked he of Pascal.

The young engineer wished for nothing better. What an excellent opportunity it afforded of speaking of Antoinette! He was not chary of words, but was as prolix as all lovers are. He was, however, careful to omit the names of the matrimonial ambassador, and the Chevalier de Jeuflas. He remarked that a friend of his had given him the address of the old manufacturer, who needed an architect; that he had the happi-

ness of saving the fortune of this worthy person, and that their intimacy dated from that period. He had seen the young lady; had asked her hand; his request had been granted—that was all.

"Have you forgotten the name of this estimable manufacturer?" asked the physician.

"His name is Gerbeau," said Pascal.

"I was not mistaken," thought Lorilleux. "And where does he live—this happy father of that charming young lady?" he asked aloud.

"No. 5 Rue Pavée," answered Pascal, unsuspectingly.

"What!" said Lorilleux, "do you marry in the Marais district? Oh! for shame, you vulgar creature!"

"My dear fellow," said Pascal, "the Marais district, next to the Faubourg St. Germain, is the district of heiresses. You can depend upon it. It is also one of those quiet quarters of Paris, where you can still find habitable dwellings, with real apartments, and staircases where two can walk abreast."

"Well, well! you are a happy mortal," said the physician; "but, what a stupid fellow I am! I have forgotten something in the letter which I have just scribbled; and, returning to the other room, he wrote in the same dis-

guised hand, in which he had written the letters, the address of Mr. Gerbeau, manufacturer, No. 5 &c., according to the information he had just received.

"Farewell" said he to Pascal, when he had finished; "I leave you in tête a tête with the memory of your beautiful Antoinette; I will go and drop this letter in the post office and get home. I hope to dream that I too may find an Antoinette."

Lorilleux, certainly, had no remorse, on account of this infamous treason. In his eyes, the conduct of Pascal, the wrong which he was doing him, would have excused even a greater perfidy. But the blow, which had struck him, was too recent not to have produced some effects. He had vainly striven to gain the mastery of himself, and his countenance, which was ordinarily very pale, seemed livid. His effort to control himself caused drops of perspiration to dampen his forehead. His hand still trembled, while shaking the honest hand of his friend.

"Something extraordinary must have occurred to you this evening," said Pascal, looking at him fixedly. "Have you experienced any serious vexation? Are you sick?"

"Nothing is the matter with me, I assure you," answered Lorilleux, unblushingly. "Never in my life have I felt better."

He then went away hurriedly. He felt the need of being alone. The two letters burned his very pocket. When he reached the post office he reflected: "If I post Gerbeau's letter, he will probably close his door in Pascal's face; but Pascal will very likely find some way of having an explanation; it is possible that a reconciliation may ensue. If, on the other hand, I give Mr. Divorne sufficient time to reach here, the anger of the two parents will mix the cards in such a manner that the marriage will be for ever broken off. It will require four days for Mr. Divorne to receive the letter and get here, if he hurries. I will, therefore, have to wait only four days, before I can hurl my fire-brand into Mr. Gerbeau's house."

Lorilleux then retired to rest, as self-satisfied as Titus when he had not lost a day.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was eight o'clock in the morning. Pascal had arisen at dawn—that is, about a quarter of an hour before—and was pacing

his appartments with a tape-measure in his hand. "Decidedly," said he to himself, "there is not room enough here; these apartments are too small; and, when I have put up the partitions as they were before, they will not be an inch larger, although my landlord thinks just the contrary. I must look elsewhere, which is very annoying; and I know I will regret being deprived of the view on the Square. It is true that, as a compensation, I will no longer see before me the top of the Lyceum theatre, which looks like a peddler's basket without the handle."

The entrance of his father abruptly interrupted Pascal's monologue. "My father!" he exclaimed, dropping the measure from his hand in his surprise. "Yes, it is I," answered the attorney; "but, first, one word, only one; are you going to get married? Is it true?"

"I have written to you about it," answered Pascal.

"And through the medium of an heiress-merchant?" asked the father.

Pascal had been very guarded not to allude to Mr. de Saint Roch in his letter; hence he was much astonished, and, still more, vexed to see that his father knew the fact. He had, however, no idea of denying

it, believing that he could certainly rely on his father's discretion.

"It is true," he said.

"Unfortunate boy!" exclaimed the father.

"Please let me explain how it all came about. It began as a jest, which has turned out seriously; but I shall owe my happiness to it.

Pascal's narrative was prolonged, because he did not omit the most trifling incident, and Mr. Divorne listened to all the details with the same patient attention which he gave to his clients when they stated their cases. When Pascal had concluded, Mr. Divorne exclaimed: "Poor fellow! And dost thou not see the snare? Dost thou not understand that thou art the dupe of these men?"

"But, my dear father, it appears to me that accident alone—"

"And dost thou allow thyself to be so easily ensnared?" interrupted Mr. Divorne. "Thou! But thou shouldst understand that such people conceal their deceit; if they were not sly, how could they catch any one? I acknowledge, however, that their plan is a very ingenious one, and a sharper person than thou might have been misled, But a cunning old attorney cannot be so easily deceived, and I am here to defend thee. Zounds!"

The attorney was thus awakening a nest of foul suspicions in Pascal's heart. He, however, still wished to uphold the Gerbeau family, but his father interrupted him, saying:

"Let us see; what dost thou know about this family? Whom hast thou consulted? Who is answerable to thee for them? All thou knowst about them thou hast got from two intriguers, who are leagued together to entrap thee, that is, to have thee enter a family tarnished and ruined."

"Ruined!" exclamed Pascal.

"Thou thyself hast told me that the fortune of Gerbeau has been, or was nearly compromised in a business enterprise. Art thou certain that he has not more of this same kind of business?"

"If money were the only question," said Pascal, "I am rich enough for two."

"Very well; I admit he may be rich, very rich, but does that prove him an honest man? I know, by Jove a number, of rascals who are millionnaires. But judging from the actions of the two intriguers, I think I can confidently say that it is necessary for thee to abandon all idea of marriage."

Pascal did not say a word. It appeared to him, while his father was speaking, as if

a veil was falling from his eyes. Had he not acted very inconsiderately ?"

"Listen to me, my son," resumed the attorney : "let us reason a little. When the father of an honorable family wishes to marry his daughter, does he, in order to find her a husband, address himself to a gentleman like—what dost thou call thy intriguer ?"

"Mr. de Saint Roch."

"Well, let Saint Roch pass," continued the father : if thou hadst a daughter, wouldst thou have acted like Gerbeau ? No. This alone should have opened thy eyes. And, then, how hast thou been admitted into this family? All at once, without information, without reference, on the word of a would-be associate—thou didst enter that house as a beggar enters a church, and thou wast immediately allowed to pay thy addresses to the young lady—Bless my heart! Dost thou not see what kind of people they are ?"

"But, my dear father," answered Pascal, "they are received in honorable society. It was at an evening party, at the residence of an old magistrate—"

"And so dost thou still believe in the old magistrate ? A magistrate to whose house a swindler has free access ! Poor boy !

They invited thee to a dance in a ball got up for the purpose; the dancers were hired for the evening—"

"Oh! dear father," said Pascal, I certainly understand men too well to be deceived in that manner, and—"

"My dear sir," interrupted the father, "where a good price is given, honest-looking intriguers are to be found in abundance. Dost thou wish me to give thee my reasons for these assertions? Be it so. The Gerbeau family is rich and honorable—very honorable—I admit that; but it is the daughter who—"

"Oh, dear father!" exclaimed Pascal struck to the heart: "I pray you, do not speak in that way. She, so pure, so beautiful—Oh! if you only knew her; if you but saw her sweet countenance and her frank open eyes, you would acknowledge your injustice and your error.

Mr. Divorne shrugged his shoulders and said: "What! thou, in thy thirtieth year, dost speak in this way. Why, when I was only eighteen, I knew how much confidence I could place in this appearance of candor. Thou still believest that lovely, tender, timid eyes are the faithful reflection of a beautiful soul? Why, if a woman intends to deceive thee or anybody, her eyes will never reveal

any more of her heart than will the calm surface of a lake reveal the slime and the mire heaped up in the depths of its limpid waters—"

"But I love her," said Pascal, with tears in his eyes; "I love her!"

"Alas ! my poor son," said Mr. Divorne, "I fear that this is without hope. But, before any decision, it is necessary to consider and collect information; this is what I will do this very day; but now give me something to eat, because I am dying with hunger."

While Mr. Divorne was breakfasting, he made an effort to console his son. "Courage!" said he: "do not be disconsolate; we will find thee another woman, in case thou canst not marry this one. Thy mother has one already for thee, and I must say that the news of thy marriage gave her a great deal of pain, a great deal indeed, and she has wept over it. Hadst thou consulted her, this would not have happened. Thou wouldst have come to Lannion and seen the young lady whom she has chosen for thee, and thou wouldst have loved her. But nothing is lost. If this marriage is dropped, thou wilt still love her—"

"I cannot love any one but Antoinette," sighed Pascal, sadly.

"Is it really as serious as all that?" asked the lawyer, tossing his head; "well, it is not necessary to remain long in this state of uncertainty; this very evening thou wilt be settled. Send for a coach and give me the address of this young lady's father, and of thy two intriguers. Dost thou not know any of the friends or the enemies—though there is really no difference between them—of the Gerbeau family?"

"I do not know any of their relatives," said Pascal.

"Extraordinary! Thou art a wonderful man. This is, however, very important. Come now, my son, try to remember—"

"It is of no use." said Passal. "I really do not know any one, except, perhaps, their notary."

"Their notary?" said Mr. Divorne, inquiringly. "Thou knowest their notary, and hast not mentioned him! And thou hast not been to see him! But, my dear son, when it is a question of marriage, notaries are the very first sources of references; they alone are consulted; they were established for this express purpose. Give me his name at once."

"Mr. Bertaud."

"Mr. Bertaud!" said Mr. Divorne, thoughtfully. "I do not know him; but never mind

that. His title is sufficient. He is my friend, or ought to be. All ministerial officers are my friends; we are brothers, or nearly so. I will begin my tour with him. I will start. Do not feel uneasy."

If Mr. Divorne had really thought that he could have found even tolerable references, he would not have gone in search of them; he would have simply and solely refused his consent, and would have availed himself of Pascal's first moment of surprise to exact from him the promise to proceed no further in the matter.

But he expected to gather some singular stories about the parents of this young lady, which would represent that she had been exposed for sale in the store of the marriage negotiator; he was prepared to listen to deplorable revelations and strange confidences, and it rejoiced him while thinking over it, as he was entering the carriage. He rejoiced, because, before leaving Lannion, he had promised his wife that he would put an end to this marriage, which would thus be broken off, without any manœuvring or exercise of authority on his part. In this case, Pascal himself, far from having a grudge against him, would be grateful for his interference, and for not having decided on the positive breaking off of the marriage

till the steps he was taking to ascertain the truth, had demonstrated the necessity of doing so. This is what the attorney was thinking of, while mounting the stairs to Mr. Bertaud's office.

Pascal, left to himself, was distressed. Had he been duped or not?

Appearances, it is true, were in favor of the attorney; but appearances are deceitful. How was it that the name of Miss Gerbeau was found on Mr. de Saint Roch's list of heiresses? There must have been some hidden reasons for it. Ah! how bitterly he regretted having gone so far, groping like a blind man! Experience and reason told him, convinced him that his father was in the right; but he was in love, and his heart warmly pleaded the cause of Antoinette.

The noise of an animated discussion in the ante-room broke off these reflections of Pascal, and, almost on the same instant, the Chevalier de Jeuflas entered, or, rather rushed in, in violation of the positive orders to the servant not to admit any one.

The first impulse of Pascal was to jump at the throat of the Chevalier, and choke him; but, fortunately, he controlled himself, aud all his anger vanished at the thought that the Chevalier was Antoinette's father's

intimate friend. Poor Mr. de Jeuflas! He looked ten years older. In one night, chagrin had made deep furrows on his brow. He who, the evening before, held himself so straight, was now bent in body, and his head shook. His toilette had been neglected; his cravat was rumpled; his shoes were bespattered with mud, and the few hairs he had, which usually seemed to be so naturally and so symmetrically arranged, were in disorder.

He also must have received a terrible blow, and appeared no less afflicted than his young friend. He was evidently very much affected, his countenance indicated utter despondency, and his voice was tremulous, although he still lisped. "Well, well," said he, in a pitiable tone, "everything has failed; but you already know the misfortune, I see it in your sadness—" and the Chevalier, overwhelmed, sat, or rather dropped into an arm-chair.

"Yes," said Pascal, "the arrival of my father—"

"Yes, your father! But have you not received the letter of Mr. Gerbeau ?" inquired the Chevalier.

"I have received some letters," replied Pascal, but have not opened them, they are all on the mantle-piece.

The Chevalier rose with an effort, and, taking the yet untouched correspondence of his young friend, searched for a moment among the letters, papers and imprints of the morning, and then said: "Here is Mr. Gerbeau's letter; I know his handwriting. You will allow me to read it, will you not?" and, without waiting for Pascal's answer, he opened the envelope and rapidly glanced over the contents of the letter.

"Oh!" exclaimed he, after he had finished, "all is now over. I know Mr. Gerbeau by heart; he would rather perish than confess that he had been deceived. Take this letter," said he, passing it to the young man; "read—and, especially, be calm."

Calmness was certainly, under the circumstances, very necessary. Mr. Gerbeau had written under the impulse of violent anger, and had not measured his expressions. He had written as follows:

"SIR:

Take no further trouble to present yourself at my house. You will hereafter find no one there. I know all. I have been informed of your perfidious manœuvres to secure my confidence. I know the odious accomplices, who have procured you admission to my house, and am not ignorant of your expulsion from the Polytechnic school.

My keenest regret is that I am under obligations to you. Fix your own price for your services; ask for half of my fortune, but no longer think of my daughter.

GERBEAU."

Pascal read this offensive letter slowly. He could not comprehend much of it, it is true, but, what he did, vexed him slightly. His anxiety was to learn the motive which induced Mr. Gerbeau to act in this way.

"Is this a comedy?" said he to himself. "But why? Doubtless to anticipate the breaking off of the marriage, to forestall the inquiries of my father. But how could any one know of the arrival of my father ?"

He could not find any satisfactory solution to these questions. At last, he quietly placed the letter on the table. Mr. de Jeuflas, who was observing him closely, and looking for an outburst of passion, was greatly surprised at his calmness.

"Well," asked the Chevalier, "what do you say to all this ?"

"Nothing," replied Pascal. "Mr. Gerbeau has, without doubt, become crazy. He writes in an insulting manner, and, I will be hanged, if I know the reason for it."

"What, do you not understand ?"

"I ask your pardon," said Pascal; "I see very clearly that he no longer wishes to give

me his daughter, and this is all I do see. It was not worth while to have Mr. de Saint Roch propose her to me."

"But, unfortunate man, if he rejects you, it is because he has been informed of the part which Mr. de Saint Roch has had in this matter," said the Chevalier.

"By heavens, this is too strong!" answered Pascal. "Do you expect to make me believe that it is without the knowledge of Mr. Gerbeau, that the name of his daughter was placed on the register of your friend, and with the titles to support it, as Mr. de Saint Roch says ?"

"I swear that he is ignorant of it," said Mr. de Jeuflas.

"Then I have missed the mark," replied Pascal.

"It is, however, easily explained," said Mr. de Jeuflas. "In the marriages which Mr. de Saint Roch negotiates, it is frequently the case that one of the parties in interest is ignorant of his agency. You are under the impression that he is acquainted with all whom he marries; but this is by no means the case. He has agents co-operating who work for him, secure references, and who—"

"Share the fees!" interrupted Pascal. "That is excellent! So, Chevalier, you

are one of those co-operators—that is a nice word!"

Mr. de Jeuflas, under the sardonic look of Pascal, blushed deeply. For a moment he remained silent and was evidently embarrassed. Suddenly recovering his confidence he replied: "Well, yes, I am one of Mr. de Saint Roch's agents. I must I live, and I know that there are occupations worse than mine; and, if there is any shame in it, I share it with many men of high social standing—men who are largely decorated too—and also with a number of old ladies highly esteemed and honored, and very devout. Ah! I know that Mr. de Saint Roch has many agents whom hardly any one would suspect, and no one accuse—But, after all, where is the harm, so long as you are treated fairly?"

"Fairly!" repeated Pascal."

"Yes, sir," said Mr. de Jeuflas, "and I can clearly explain to you the method of Mr. de Saint Roch. He has agents, and I, for example, am one. I make a memorandum of all the marriageable young ladies among my acquaintances, whose parents are my friends. I collect the information as to their fortune, manners, etc. I do the same with the young men, and I bring it all to Mr. de Saint Roch. The other co-operators

do the same. He transcribes our memoranda, and so can offer the young men or young ladies whose names have been submitted to him, and all this without their knowledge. This is precisely the way it stands with Miss Gerbeau. Sometimes the marriage is actually concluded without any direct application to Mr. de Saint Roch, and it is in this that he displays his ability. All is transacted by his agents whom he places in communication with the parties."

Pascal still preserved his sad look, though in his heart he was enraptured, and he would willingly have embraced the matrimonial agent, because he did not doubt his veracity. Neither the manner nor the tone of the afflicted Chevalier could be imitated. Hope once more began to dawn in the heart of the young man. "So then," said he to himself, "Antoinette is not lost to me." He then asked aloud: "How then has Mr. Gerbeau received his information?"

"I should have told you this in the beginning," answered the Chevalier; "It was through an anonymous letter."

"Oh!" exclaimed Pascal.

"Yes," continued Mr. de Jeuflas, "an anonymous letter, which must have been written by one of your friends."

"You must know, sir," said Pascal, "that

my friends are not capable of such an infamous action."

"It must, at least, have been written by some one who has access to your house, because the note, in which Mr. de Saint Roch informed you of my call, was inclosed in the letter."

"It is impossible," exclaimed Pascal, and he rushed to the desk to look for that important note. It was in vain that he hunted for it, ransacked his drawers, turned his drawings upside down, shook his papers separately. The note could not be found. He returned to his seat greatly discouraged.

"It is incredible!" said he. "An anonymous letter! But who informed my father?"

"Ah!" said the Chevalier, "you must have some perfidious friend."

"I will find him," said Pascal, "if I can see, for five minutes, that letter addressed to Mr. Gerbeau—"

"Go and ask him for it," said Mr. de Jeuflas, despondingly. "As for myself, I have not the courage to do it. He treated me very uncivilly this morning, and almost thrust me out of doors."

"How the deuce is it that a man, like you, accepts the pay of an agent of marriages?" asked Pascal.

"Ah! sir, want," said Mr. de Jeuflas. "I

was once rich, but am now ruined. Can a man, at my age, go to work? Besides, what am I fit for?"

"Poor Chevalier!" said Pascal; "I really pity you."

"You do wrong in scoffing at me at all events. This affair of Mr. Gerbeau ruins me for ever. What will become of me if this affair is noised about? My honor, my credit, my standing will be gone; every door will be shut in my face."

Pascal pitied the unhappy man, and said: "Whatever may happen, I promise you that I will keep silence."

"But will Mr. Gerbeau hold his peace? This very morning he drove me out of his house—Oh, shame! the Chevalier de Jeuflas! and by this time he has doubtless related the fact to twenty persons."

"I may be mistaken," said Pascal, "but it seems to me that it would be Mr. Gerbeau's interest for his daughter's sake, to remain silent. You are alarmed without cause."

Pascal's efforts were useless. He could not bring a smile to the lips of the unfortunate agent, who had been severely tried, and was no more than the shadow of himself. When he left, he grasped the young man's hand affectionately, giving him this parting advice: "You have a dangerous enemy;

be on your guard."

This advice was certainly useless. Pascal, struck to the heart, in his love had already determined to find what wretch had thus betrayed friendship. If Mr. Gerbeau would never revoke his decision, his happiness was gone for ever. He would be revenged.

CHAPTER IX.

Mr. de Saint Roch, with eyes brightened by inspiration, was seated at his desk—before his green cases containing so many and such fearful secrets, and his registers inscribed in hieroglyphics—laboring for the happiness of humanity.

This apostle of marriage was writing an advertisement. It was an extraordinary production—one of those which, when placed on the fourth page of a newspaper, even of a journal called *The Friend of Religion*, will make it amusing.

The task was difficult. This was apparent from the paper before him. It was full of interlineations and erasures. The adver-

tisement was the most serious point in the mission of the illustrious ambassador.

Every line cost money. The publisher applied his measuring rule to every inch of space occupied. It was important to say a great deal in few words. To this end the efforts of the marriage-negotiator were directed. His advertisement, which was intended to make the hearts of all the unmarried beat with expectation and curiosity, was more particularly addressed to the fathers of families. It read as follows:

"Discreet fathers—I am the custodian of the honor of families, I, Saint Roch, who restored marriage forty years ago. I have no branch offices. My office is the antechamber to that of the mayor. My good will is almost equal to that of the sacrament. When your daughters are not provided for, send them to me, and I will find for them advantageous alliances. Write me frankly. I am just in receipt of a complete assortment of princes of the highest quality who contemplate marrying.

"Fathers of families! You will bless me, Saint Roch, because—"

At this moment the Ambassador was startled by six strokes of a bell. "Oh!" said he, "a client is awaiting me in the pearl-grey saloon." He immediately con-

cealed the unfinished advertisement in his drawer. Opening a closet, he took from it a blue dress-coat, exactly similar to the one he wore, with this little difference, that the one he had on was shabby, while this one was brand-new.

Having changed his clothes in a moment —a change so important in a matrimonial negotiator—he approached the looking-glass, and glanced over his toilet. He drew out his cuffs of Mechlin lace, adjusted the frill of his shirt bosom, arranged the numerous waterfall chains of his watch, rubbed for an instant the precious stones of his rings to increase their brilliancy, and, finally, with a dandy like movement of the head, gave a more gracious turn to his light curly peruke. Then, taking a last look in the mirror, and assuming a charming smile, he proceeded towards the pearl-grey saloon. Doubtless a patron was getting impatient.

He entered, and, as was his noble and affable habit, he graciously greeted the new visitor three times, in accordance with the rules of the professors of the best school of etiquette: the heels on the line, the toes projecting outwards, the chest slightly inclined, the elbow rounded, and the head on a level with the heart. He made the second salutation, and was preparing for the third,

when the visitor sprang at his throat without respect for his frill, exclaiming: "You wretch!"

Poor Mr. de Saint Roch was terribly frightened. He bounded to one side and tried to get a table between him and his unceremonious visitor. His rapid retreat was successful, but in its execution he struck the table and drew after him seven or eight china votive offerings, which fell to the floor and were broken to pieces.

"Ah!" thought Mr. de Saint Roch, "he must be some newly married man who is not satisfied. I can perceive as much."

He was, however, at fault this time. It was Mr. Gerbeau himself. The anonymous letter of Lorilleux was producing its effect.

Mr. Gerbeau was no longer the old and honest ex-manufacturer with whom we have been acquainted, but a tiger broken loose. To learn that his daughter's name had been placed on the registers of Mr. de Saint Roch had put him in a fury; he had vowed to cane him, and had come to make good his word.

But the negotiator of marriages was now entrenched behind his table, and had recovered some of his courage. Addressing his adversary, he said: "If you attempt any further violence, I will call my servants. Now, if you wish to talk, let us do so, but

let it be calmly. Who are you, and what?"

"Who am I? You rascal!" exclaimed the ex-manufacturer: "I am a father whose daughter you have nearly compromised, you infamous intriguer! I am Gerbeau. You would have palmed off on me for a son-in-law a man of abandoned character—you vile broker!—one Pascal Divorne, a man turned out of the Polytechnic School in disgrace!"

"Silence!" cried Mr. de Saint Roch; "you are calumniating a young man whose little finger is worth more than your whole body."

"Ah! would you insult me, you rascal?" replied Mr. Gerbeau. "Wait a moment, and we will see." He ran around the table trying to catch the negotiator, but Mr. de Saint Roch was as nimble as himself. The remarkable discussion in the meantime went on: "Who has allowed you to interfere in the marriage of my daughter?" demanded Mr. Gerbeau.

"I am not accountable to any one," replied Mr. de Saint Roch.

"I will appeal to the court."

"I care nothing for that; I have decisions which sanction my profession as honorable."

Finally becoming tired of this chase, out

of breath and exhausted, the two adversaries stopped; but, good heavens! what a disorder in the well arranged toilet of Mr. de Saint Roch! The gold chains were in all directions over his breast; the frill hung like a rag; one of his ruffles was half torn off, and the beautiful blonde hair in disorder.

But the illustrious negotiator had lost none of his brilliant loquacity. He accordingly undertook, by dint of eloquence, to mollify the ferocious Mr. Gerbeau. "You have spoken of courts, sir," exclaimed he, "but have not I also a right to complain of your outburst of rage? You have vilified the noblest of professions; you have attempted to desecrate my priesthood!"

"Blackguard!" muttered Mr. Gerbeau through his teeth.

"Others have tried to tarnish my reputation. I have obtained justice against them. Do you not know of the judgments which have been made in my favor?"

"I scorn them!" replied Mr. Gerbeau.

"Have you read the speeches of my lawyers?"

"Ah! indeed, I care a good deal about them," ironically replied Mr. Gerbeau.

"The lawyers' opinion printed at my own expense?" concluded Mr. de Saint

Roch.

Mr. Gerbeau was beginning to be a little ashamed of his fit of anger, and said in a different humor: "You have dared to mingle the name of my daughter in your dirty intrigues, and I cannot endure it. I will not leave here till I have torn to pieces, with my own hands, the page on which you have written the name of my daughter; and I forbid you henceforth to have any thing to do concerning her! I demand your promise and guarantee."

"Be it so," answered the matrimonial agent. "Please to follow me, sir, into my study, and we will come to an understanding."

An understanding begun in so lively a manner, necessarily required time. It was an interminable affair; but never before had the celebrated negotiator been so noble, so exquisite, so pathetic. Forgetting the disorder of his toilet, which at any other moment would have filled him with confusion, and paralyzed his ability, he assiduously heaped up reason on reason, not to exonerate himself, but to convince his adversary. In spite of the difficulties, he hoped to restore to its former integrity this broken marriage-alliance, which had been so beautifully, so admirably combined!

He understood the matter better than any one else.

First of all, he attacked the prejudices of Mr. Gerbeau; and, in order to assure himself of his sympathy, Mr. de Saint Roch did not hesitate to tear off, before the eyes of the ex-manufacturer, the mysterious veil which concealed his operations from the profane world. He exposed to him the ingenious machinery of his establishment. He extolled the grandeur of his mission and the benefits incident from his mediation.

"Is not this profession a desirable progress in our civilization, as well as steam, gas, ready-made clothing, omnibusses, and the electric telegraph ?" he asked.

But when he came to Pascal, he enumerated in glowing language the excellent qualities of the young engineer, so rich, so economical—a real treasure of a son-in-law. He reached indeed the sublime—nay, carried away by his subject, he actually broke his vow of discretion. In defense of Pascal, slandered in so cowardly a manner, as having been disgracefully sent from the Polytechnic School, he related why the young man had resigned his commission. He might as well have spoken to the walls. Mr. Gerbeau remained colder than marble. He confined himself

to an occasional remark, reminding Mr. de Saint Roch of the object of his visit. Perceiving, however, that the eloquence of Mr. de Saint Roch was inexhaustible, he finally said: "Let us speak no more about it. I do not believe a word of all you have said; I may be mistaken, but I believe that you have some great interest in the marriage of Mr. Divorne."

"Ah, sir, notaries also, have a great interest in marrying their clients—"

"Yes, but they are government officers; they can be trusted; their probity and their discretion—"

Mr. de Saint Roch now saw, as he thought, the way for giving the decisive blow, and exclaimed: "Their discretion! Ah, sir! I see that you do not know any thing of mine. I have, however, expended more than a hundred thousand francs to publish it to the whole world. A secret entrusted to me is more secure than your money in the Bank of France. My house is the confessional of the world, the sepulchre of all secrets. Never will any of the confidences entrusted to me be divulged. Even death will not cause me to reveal. At my death everything will follow me to my grave—my office, my titles, my chronicles. I have never trained a pupil. As to my registers, you

can open them. Cast your eye over this catalogue of all the heiresses of the five parts of the world. You cannot understand any of the hieroglyphical characters, which I alone can decipher—"

The noise of a bell, which sounded in a distant apartment, abruptly interrupted the negotiator, who listened attentively, and numbered five strokes. "The devil take the importunate fellow," muttered he: "it is a visitor in the sky-blue saloon." Almost immediately a servant half opened one of the doors of the study and made a sign to Mr. de Saint Roch.

"I beg a thousand pardons," said he to Mr. Gerbeau; "I will be with you again in a moment;" and he approached the servant. "Sir," said the servant, in a low voice, "there is a gentleman in the sky-blue saloon."

"I know it; I have heard the bell, it is useless to disturb me."

"You say this, because you do not know that the gentleman appears to be in a fury. He would not wait, and threathened to smash everything," replied the servant.

"The deuce! What kind of a man is he?"

"A large man with gold spectacles; somewhat old, tastily dressed, with a provincial appearance. This is his card."

Mr. de Saint Roch took it, glanced at it, and uttered an exclamation of joy as he read:

"PIERRE DIVORNE,

LICENSED ATTORNEY."

"The father!" thought he; "Heaven has sent him." Possessed by one of those sublime inspirations which decide battles, he shoved aside the servant and rushed into the passage, leaving his visitor alone and astonished.

Mr. Divorne, the father, had just come from the office of Mr. Bertaud, who had given him such unexpected details of Antoinette's family, and such brilliant references, that he bitterly regretted the promise he had given to his wife to break off the marriage. But, slave to his word, he entrenched himself in his resolution to refuse his consent in spite of everything, and he had now come to give vent to his anger and to upbraid the negotiator, as he deserved. Hence he did not greet Mr. de Saint Roch—who was running towards him—very kindly. The ambassador did not bandy words, but taking the arm of the attorney and pushing him before him, kept repeating: "In my

study, in my study." When he reached it, he addressed himself to his first visitor, saying:

"Sir, I have the honor to introduce to you Mr. Pierre Divorne, the father of Pascal, a licensed attorney at the bar of Lannion." He then turned to the attorney and said: "Sir, I introduce you to Mr. Gerbeau, an ex-manufacturer of Roubaix, and the father of Miss Antoinette."

The two fathers greeted each other coldly. In the meantime Mr. de Saint Roch seated himself behind his desk, as a man entirely disinterested in the question.

There was a long silence between the attorney and the ex-manufacturer. After a while both began to speak, each of them hoping to silence the other, and to compel him to hear.

Mr. Gerbeau had not obtained any references, and had persistently believed himself duped. He was accordingly the most exasperated. He spoke much the louder, and repeated over and over again: "I will hear nothing; I positively decline your son—"

This obstinacy finally angered Mr. Divorne. "Let us go to Mr. Bertaud's, where we can come to an understanding," he proposed.

"Be it so," said Gerbeau: and both left by

the passage through which they had been admitted, (at the risk of meeting some one) without taking leave of Mr. de Saint Roch.

This incivility did not afflict the negotiator. "They go to the notary's," said he, rubbing his hands cheerfully. "It is a good sign. This transaction has given me some trouble; but it is now as good as done. Well, here are ten thousand francs at least, of which three thousand are for the Chevalier de Jeuflas; clear gain seven thousand francs." Seating himself at his desk, he began again to write his advertisement. It was concluded as follows:

"The characteristic of Mr. de Saint Roch is that self-interest does not control him. His aim is to disseminate morality among mankind. He seeks to do this through the medium of marriage. Secresy and disinterestedness is his motto."

The illustrious negotiator had judged correctly. All was arranged at the office of the notary. Mr. Bertaud knew how to apply these beautiful and noble words of a country notary to his successor: "Remember, young man, that a notary is an interposing medium, for the purpose of deadening the shock between two separate interests." He skillfully interposed between these two fathers—Mr. Gerbeau who would not give

his daughter, and Mr. Divorne who persistently insisted on having her for his son, since she was refused to him. But thanks to the inexhaustible patience of Mr. Bertaud—the most enduring and impressive of notaries—they at last came to an understanding.

In less than five hours of parley, the marriage settlement was arranged, decided, concluded, and almost signed. It was stipulated, among other conditions, that Mr. Gerbeau would give five hundred thousand francs in cash to his daughter. This was at least fifty thousand francs more than he intended; but his mind had been influenced by both the notary and Mr. Divorne.

The attorney, so unmanageable in regard to the dowry, was far from suspecting that while he was working for the increase of the dowry, he was also working for the matrimonial ambassador.

The day of the nuptials was finally fixed. The two fathers left Mr. Bertaud's office the best of friends. Mr. Divorne hurried to announce the good news to his son. The visit of the Chevalier de Jeuflas had singularly reassured Pascal, but he was far from expecting such a prompt solution. He fairly staggered back when he saw his

father and Mr. Gerbeau entering. But it does not take long to recover from emotions produced by the shock of unexpected happiness.

Pascal was made acquainted with what had taken place, both at the office of the marriage agent, and at Mr. Bertaud's. He soon perceived that he was the least surprised of the three.

"Who could ever have expected this?" continually repeated Mr. Divorne. It would certainly have embarrassed the attorney, who so suddenly forgot the solemn pledge which he made to his wife.

"What I will never be able to understand," said Mr. Gerbeau, "is how this dear Pascal ever had the incredible, the impossible idea of going to Mr. de Saint Roch."

"Oh! as for that," answered Pascal, "I solemnly declare that all I intended was to have a very innocent jest."

"As though people could jest with marriage!" said Mr. Divorne, gravely; "that would be like playing with fire."

"And besides," continued Pascal, "who would ever have suspected the part of the matrimonial agent, if a professed friend of mine had not busied himself to write to you? The unworthy man intended to injure me, but has instead rendered me the greatest

service. I wish I knew whom to thank."

"It would be necessary to see the handwriting," said Mr. Gerbeau. "This is the letter."

"And this is mine," said Mr. Divorne. But the skillfully disguised hand revealed nothing to Pascal. He turned the two anonymous letters over and over again, racking his brain to guess the author's motive, when he discovered his initial letters, "P. D." embossed on the corners of the two sheets. "Zounds!" said he, "these letters were written in my house."

"By whom?" asked Mr. Gerbeau and the attorney in one voice.

"Ah! that is the difficulty," answered Pascal. "Many friends visit me." But, at the same time, however, he thought within himself that only Lorilleux or John Lantier could have come into the possession of the note of Mr. de Saint Roch. There could be no question about that.

At this moment Pascal called to mind the paleness of his friend the last time he saw him. He also remembered that the physician had remained alone in his room that evening, to write a letter he said. Lorilleux was evidently the guilty one. This cowardly treason on the part of the friend of his youth overwhelmed him.

Deceits in friendship are more cruel than those in love, because they are less expected. He, however, was careful not to repeat aloud the name he had just conjectured. Although indignant at the physician, he still loved him, and was unwilling to hold up to scorn the name of an old college chum. Besides, he was ashamed to confess that he had been duped by appearances.

After a long silence, Mr. Gerbeau asked him: "Well, have you guessed? Are you upon the scent?"

"No," replied Pascal, "I have not the slightest suspicion."

"It is necessary to inquire into this," interposed the attorney. "If you remain in this state of uncertainty, you will mistrust all your friends."

"I prefer not to think any longer about this infamous act," said Pascal decidedly. He crushed the letters and threw them into the corner, intending, however, to take them up again so as to confound and overwhelm the traitor Lorilleux.

"Be it so," exclaimed Mr. Gerbeau. "Let us think no more about it, nor about Mr. de Saint Roch or his co-operator the Chevalier de Jeuflas. Let the pardon be universal. I will go immediately to console my poor daughter, whom I left bathed in tears—now

I may say it."

Pascal was not grieved to learn that Miss Antoinette had wept, and he heartily embraced his future father-in-law. It was doubtless to thank him for this avowal.

CHAPTER X.

Following the example of careful miners, who quickly depart after applying the match to the fuse of the charged mine, Lorilleux had kept at a distance waiting the explosion of his anonymous shells. He did not appear till the day after the eventful one on which the marriage of Pascal had been decided.

The physician dissembled his serious uneasiness under a countenance agreeably playful. "What news?" asked he, as he placed himself in the arm-chair of his friend. "As for myself, I am overwhelmed with work; all my patients have passed the watchword to one another to fall sick on the same day. But, by the way, what about your marriage?"

"I am, indeed, going to marry Miss Gerbeau."

"Ah!" said the physician, becoming pale. "And your father?"

"Has been here since yesterday morning."

"Does he consent?"

"Who would prevent him?"

Much disconcerted, Lorilleux asked himself earnestly "whether he had not made a mistake in addressing the letters." But Pascal, who had risen from his chair, presented him the anonymous missives, saying in a very calm voice: "Here are two letters, my friend, which had nearly prevented my marriage; take them, and be particularly careful to burn them. Let no one suspect that you are capable of such an act."

On the way to his friend, the physician had prepared himself for everything except this. He stammered a few words of excuse. He attempted to deny, but had not the strength to do it. Shame and emotion choked him. He arose, hid his face in his hands, and staggered towards the door like a drunken man. But Pascal stopped him, saying: "I do not thus easily forget twenty years of devoted friendship; Lorilleux, I forgive you."

"Ah!" exclaimed the unfortunate doctor, whose tears were mastering him. "This is a magnanimous deed, because you do not

know what has driven me to this act."

"I do not wish to know," said Pascal.

"It would be generous of you to hear me; please listen to me. Your marriage, my dear friend, is the heaviest blow which destiny could have inflicted on me. The dream of my life is over."

"What!" because I am to marry Miss Gerbeau?"

"Yes! I intended to have given you a wife—my sister. You alone appear to me to be worthy of her. I thought in this way to have assured your happiness and hers. For more than fifteen years, I have wished this union to take place."

"And why did you not speak before? By this time I would have had four children."

"I thought it best to wait."

"My dear friend, I have told you twenty times over that those, who wait till the pear ripens, never eat it.

"You can crush me," said the doctor, with a sigh. "I deserve it, but for heaven's sake, do not scoff at me."

"I have never been more serious, replied Pascal: "but see the vanity of projects! You wished me for a husband to your sister. My mother had prepared an heiress for me; John Lantier had destined for me one of his daughters—such folly! I am to marry,

and it is by chance. You therefore see, my dear friend, that a man does not marry with premeditation."

Lorilleux was too much oppressed to reply, and Pascal continued: "Listen to me. Do you wish, would you like, once in your life, to perform a sensible action? Accept at once, with your eyes closed, immediately, a proposal which I will make to you, and which will prove to you that I had already forgiven you."

"I am ready to do any thing you like."

"Lantier," said Pascal, "wished to give me one of his daughters—the eldest—with a dowry of two hundred thousand francs. I assure you that she is a charming young lady; but Lantier did not speak to me about it till this morning, when it was too late, and I already love another. But to soothe the chagrin of this afflicted father, I have proposed to him another son-in-law, and that is you. You will suit him. Do you accept? Agreed?"

"Allow me, at least, a few days to consider."

"Not a single hour. Yes or no, this instant."

Uncertain, desperate, almost crazy at having to decide on the spot so serious a matter, Lorilleux closed his eyes like a

dazed traveler who suddenly sees at his feet a yawning abyss. What a trial for one, who had uniformly deliberated on his most indifferent actions, to decide so suddenly on the most important act of his life! Triumphing at length over the life-long habit, he said: "Be it so. I accept;" and added in a low voice: "The fortune of my wife will reflect on my sister."

"I can then apprise Lantier of this?" asked Pascal.

"Yes; I have always been unhappy; perhaps, through your mediation, good fortune will come to me."

"Ah! my friend, if a man wishes happiness to enter the house he must keep the door open."

On the same evening, in order to prevent future occasion for regret, and against the advice of his father and even of Mr. Gerbeau, Pascal, after much hesitation, ventured to inform Miss Antoinette of all that had happened—the part played by the matrimonial agent and by the Chevalier de Jeuflas.

The only answer given by Antoinette was to extend her hand, as, I earnestly wish, dear reader, the woman you love will to you, when you have a like petition to present to her.

The Chevalier de Jeuflas, we may add, was not invited to the wedding, which took place two weeks later.

CHAPTER XI.

One month after their marriage the young pair had settled in a delightful house in the Champs-Elysées, fitted up, heaven only knows with what care, by John Lantier. He had become the father-in-law of Doctor Lorilleux. Mr. and Mrs. Divorne had returned to Lannion, charmed with their daughter-in-law; when one morning a gentleman called on Pascal saying that he must speak to him.

This visitor was dressed like a dandy, notwithstanding the morning hour. Over his blue dress-coat he wore a wadded light-colored over-coat lined with white satin; his gloves were a straw color; and, not to disarrange the marvelous order of his light hair, he held his hat in his hand.

The servant at first thought that this stranger, so finely gotten up, had come from some ball and mistaken the house; but as

the man persisted on the pretence of pressing business, he concluded to introduce him into his master's study.

"Good morning, my dear son," uttered the honeyed voice of Mr. de Saint Roch; "I wished to surprise you in your happiness. Will you, for this indiscretion, grant me pardon, which will be my only reward?"

Pascal did not offer a seat to the matrimonial agent.

"Well, client," continued the negotiator, "should we not bless our friend? I have not deceived you, hey? Mr. Gerbeau has done handsomely, by Jove! Three hundred thousand francs!"

"I am greatly pressed for time this morning," interrupted Pascal.

"Mr. de Saint Roch sighed heavily, and muttered: "Ungrateful man, ungrateful man! he forgets that I have been the means of his happy marriage."

"What is the matter?" inquired Pascal.

"It is the least trifle," replied the Agent. "We have a little contract between ourselves, you know—five per cent on the dowry. You have received three hundred thousand francs so that there are fifteen thousand francs coming to me."

"And suppose that I refuse to pay?" asked Pascal, with a smile.

"Oh!" said Mr. de Saint Roch, becoming pale under his vermilion, "what a jest, to haggle on your honor!"

"But suppose that I do not jest ? What if I do haggle ?" asked Pascal.

"We would then have a law-suit, and, though I regret to say it, I would surely gain it. You know that I have decisions in my—"

"Enough, enough," said Pascal: "Here, oh ! most disinterested of agents, here is your money !"

"Ah, my son !" exclaimed the illustrious man, in a sweet, pathetic voice: "I did not expect a less acknowledgment from you. It is the debt of happiness which you discharge—"

Then catching sight of a little paper-weight on the desk, he said: "I will take this with me; this souvenir will be more precious to me than the bank-notes, which you have just handed to me. Am I not a second father to you ? In seeing this precious gift of—"

"Good-bye, dear Mr. de Saint Roch," said Pascal, pushing his second father towards the door. The hierophant of Hymen's Mysteries stopped, however, one moment at the threshold. "My dear son," said he in a subdued voice: "God preserve you from the

misfortune—but, if ever you lose your wife, remember my good offices, and reserve for me your patronage."

THE END.

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